

THE LONDON READER

of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

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No. 1889.—VOL. LXXIII.]

FOR THE WEEK ENDING JULY 15, 1899.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



WITH ONE GASPING CRY FOR HELP DOT SANK, FAINTING, INTO BASIL RIVINGTON'S ARMS.

RIVINGTON OF RIVINGTON.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

BASIL RIVINGTON was seven- or eight-and-twenty, a clever, persevering, young man with what outsiders thought fair prospects, seeing that he was already engaged as managing clerk to those celebrated lawyers, Messrs. Ashdown and Parry, at a salary of three hundred a year, which seemed to lookers-on affluence for a single man with no ties; but in spite of this liberal income—in spite of the fact that Messrs. Ashdown and Parry had the fullest confidence in their managing clerk, and had been even heard to hint at a golden future, when he might become a junior partner—I doubt if you would have found—considering that he had neither sickness,

poverty, nor loss of friends to complain of—a gloomier man than our hero.

The fact was, Basil had had a bitter disappointment in boyhood, and he had never got over it. Not a love affair—nothing of the sort.

Basil flattered himself he was too wise to lose his heart to any woman. Love and marriage formed no part of his day-dreams. Although he fulfilled all his duties in the Temple with alacrity, although clients thought him a most attentive lawyer, and the partners sang his praises, in his heart of hearts Basil considered he ought never to have been in the office at all.

He brooded over his fallen fortunes almost perpetually, and cherished one darling dream—a future prosperity, in which he might take summary revenge on the man he called his enemy.

It was an old story now. Even Messrs. Ashdown and Parry, who had been legal advisers to Basil's father, had well-nigh forgotten the rights of it. They so far recognised Mr. Rivington's good birth as to invite him to all their parties.

Mrs. Parry, who was an invalid, admired the

grave, stately young man, and would have liked to make much of him if she had known how; and Mrs. Ashdown, who had daughters, would not have objected to give one of them to Basil. But with all these kindly feelings, neither of the two ladies ever alluded to the past.

"Better not," had been Mr. Ashdown's recommendation. "I shall never forget Basil is my poor friend's son. But Rivington's ruin was his own fault, and the lad's highdown talk is all a pack of nonsense. The best way is to treat him as a clerk, and keep him in his place. It'll do him more good than nursing his pride in past glories."

But the years passed. The boy grew into a man, and a handsome, fascinating man withal.

The wives had followed Mr. Ashdown's counsel.

No one ever alluded to the past prosperity of the Rivingtons. They seemed to ignore that it had ever been, and not even Mrs. Parry, who, perhaps, knew more of the reserved young lawyer than anyone else, ever dreamed of Basil's social ambition.

It was an old story now, that of the fall of the Rivingtons.

Basil's father had come into ten thousand a year on his majority, and a clear unencumbered estate. He was a gambler and a spendthrift. Before he was thirty the fortune had been squandered, and the estate mortgaged to the hilt.

Then he married an heiress, and enjoyed a kind of Indian summer of prosperity; but in these days he made the acquaintance of a stockbroker called Granger, whom both Lady Alice Rivington and her son always condemned as his evil genius.

Granger declared all his transactions with Mr. Rivington were fair and honourable, but the fact remained that before Basil was fifteen his father was penniless, and John Granger master of Rivington Hall, which, unfortunately, was unentailed.

Basil was well-nigh frantic, for he loved his ancestral home with no ordinary affection, but other troubles followed thick and fast.

Claude Rivington sank into a nervous, taciturn invalid, and died within a year of his ruin. Then the wife and son collected their forces by a Herculean effort, and a sacrifice friends called ridiculous.

They cleared Claude Rivington's name, and paid his debts to the uttermost farthing. The last penny of Lady Alice's fortune, a sum left Basil by his godmother, the family jewels, all were given up.

There was no college career then for Basil. A stool in the lawyer's office, and fifty pounds a year, with the promise of his articles by-and-by—that was the destiny of the boy whose birth seventeen years before had been celebrated by sounding bells and blazing bonfires.

But the worst blow of all remained. The worst men are sometimes the best loved.

Alice Rivington had simply worshipped her scapegrace husband. It really seemed she had only been spared long enough to clear his name and pay his debts.

She sank rapidly afterwards, and died within a year of the reprobate, nominally of some grand-sounding disease—really, as the son knew well, of a broken heart.

For ten years Basil lived alone, getting on slowly, but surely, and caring not a jot whether he did or not.

He had but one aim in life, and he did not see in the least how it was to be accomplished. He wanted to overthrow John Granger and rejoice in his ruin.

There are some men—few, I grant—who seem possessed with almost a woman's tact and discrimination.

Douglas Parry was one of these. Although he never spoke to Basil on the subject, he knew instinctively he cherished a grudge against the wealthy stockbroker; and although the whole of John Granger's business was transacted in their office, Mr. Parry managed that none of it should pass through Basil's hands.

He himself never mentioned his client's name to his managing clerk; and as Basil was a great deal too proud to ask questions, it followed that he knew nothing whatever about the way time had dealt with his enemy.

In the third year after Claude Rivington's death, John Granger retired and settled at the Hall, and then began a gala time for the tenants and villagers.

John Granger did not come of a grand family. He boasted neither blue blood nor long descent, but he was one of nature's gentlemen.

So far from wronging his quondam friend, the sums he had advanced to Mr. Rivington far exceeded the value of the Hall, considering the heavy mortgage on it when it came into his possession.

He would gladly have extended a helping hand to the reduced family; but when he heard the opprobrious names they heaped upon him, he retired into his shell, and washed his hands of them and their concerns.

He lived a simple country life. He and his wife did more good at Kingswood in a twelve-month than Claude Rivington had accomplished in all the years he had lived there.

They were well received by rich and poor.

If they had had a son he would have been permitted to choose a bride from the highest families in the county.

But no son had been born to the millionaire. His only child was a daughter, who had left him long before for an Indian home; and when he had been five years at Rivington Hall, and news came she was a widow—though he and her mother prepared at once to welcome their daughter, they were never allowed to do so.

Lady Lonsdale died at sea, and the only creature left for the old couple to take to their hearts and foster was a small, slight girl of fourteen, who looked more like a child of eight.

From that hour Dorothy became the darling of the Hall. It soon grew an established fact that Miss Lonsdale could do no wrong. If she had not been a very sweet and unselfish nature the universal spoiling she received must have ruined her. As it was, she grew up a simple English maiden, with talents of no common order, and a wondrous gift of winning hearts and making them her own.

She was an heiress, whether or not she came in for John Granger's money—since her father had left her fifty thousand pounds—so that Miss Dot was rich enough to tempt offers even if she had not been her own sweet self.

She had grown up graceful rather than elegant, interesting rather than beautiful. She had her mother's golden hair and dark blue eyes, but her features were the small, expressive ones of the Lonsdales, and she had her father's dark brows and lashes.

There was nothing coquettish or flippant about Dot—no airs or affectation. If anything she was too simple, and too much in earnest, and it was young men brought this fault—a trifle too grave.

She looked too serious for the idle badinage which has become the substitute for conversation nowadays.

And yet Dot was neither a preacher nor a saint. She delighted in dancing, and a theatre was to her the greatest of treats.

Her grandparents always said she had the lightest heart imaginable. Certainly she was the sunshine of the Hall, and they missed her bitterly when she was away, but for all that they liked Dot to pay visits to her Lonsdale kindred.

It was quite determined she should be presented to the Queen and enjoy a London season; and so, not long after her eighteenth birthday, among the list of names at the first Drawing Room of the year appeared, "Miss Lonsdale, by her aunt, the Countess of Netherton."

And the old couple at Rivington Hall gloried in the accounts which presently reached them of their darling's triumphs, even though her aunt's prediction that she would return to them an engaged young lady meant that she could never be solely their own again.

Lady Netherton was many years younger than her brother, the late Sir Henry Lonsdale, and her own children were still in the nursery.

She took a real pleasure in introducing her niece to society, while the liberal contribution old John Granger insisted on making to her expenses of the town establishment was a real assistance; for a lawsuit hung over the Nethertons, and unless it was settled in their favour the Earl would find himself with barely eight hundred a year on which to maintain his honours, and although his wife had not been portionless, the interest of her five thousand pounds was not a great deal when you remembered they had five children, all under ten, all born with handles to their names, and all—unless fortune changed her mind and smiled on them once more—condemned to small means.

"Really, Dot, you are a most enviable girl!"

It was a bright May morning when Lord Netherton gave vent to this opinion. Dot sat in the small room sacred to the studies of the Earl's olive branches.

Lord Dudge, the heir to the title (and, alas! probably to little else), sat on her lap, and the Ladies Marion, Jessie, and Louisa, clustered round, while the baby from its mother's arms smiled approvingly.

Lord Netherton half sighed as he looked at the little group.

"I am very happy," returned Dot, calmly. "But I don't see that I am to be envied, Uncle Guy!"

Lord Netherton looked at his wife.

"Do you know that the partner who took you into supper last night has been here to seek for a longer partnership?" asked the Countess, purposely avoiding names, from regard to the many little pitchers around her. "And I don't believe there is a girl in England who would not gladly be in your place!"

"Well," said Dot, smiling, "they can't all be there, you know, but one can, and doubtless will."

"Dot!"

"The honour would be too great," said Miss Lonsdale, laughing. "I am sure, aunt, I was never meant for a great lady. It would be like living always in a conservatory, where the heat almost stifles one!"

A glance from her husband and Lady Netherton left the room, calling Dot to come with her.

Miss Lonsdale shrugged her shoulders, and followed her aunt submissively to her own boudoir.

"My dear child," began the Countess, "do try and be serious. Lord Fane is coming at twelve o'clock for his answer."

"His answer is quite ready. I wouldn't marry him if he was as rich as Croesus!"

"Dot!"

"He is so intensely dull. Why, Aunt Kate, I was yawning after ten minutes of his society last night, and only think what it would be to live with him!"

"Do you ever mean to live with anyone?" asked her ladyship suddenly.

"Certainly. I assure you I have not the slightest desire for a solitary existence. I mean to live at Kingswood with my dear old grandparents!"

"But, Dorothy, Mr. and Mrs. Granger can't live for ever."

Dot turned on her with dreary eyes.

"You need not have reminded me of that," she cried reproachfully. "Of course I know people who are seventy and sixty-five can't be expected to live as long as a girl of eighteen! I must lose them some day, but not for years!"

"But wouldn't you like a house of your own, Dot—a house where you were queen?"

"I have a home of my own," returned Miss Lonsdale, calmly; "and as to being queen, it is a very funny thing, aunt, but wherever I am people seem to let me have my own way—you and uncle Guy, as well as the rest."

"I don't quite know who could help it; but, Dorothy, this is your fourth offer, and you will never get another so advantageous! Think how pleased Mr. and Mrs. Granger would be!"

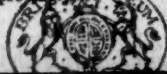
"They wouldn't!" contradicted Dot. "They would much prefer to keep me."

"They gave your mother up willingly. I was only a girl of thirteen when she married, but I can remember how they rejoiced in her happiness."

"But, you see," persisted Dot, "if I married Lord Fane there would be no happiness for them to rejoice at. I have often heard about my mother. Papa wasn't a baronet or a rich man when she married him. He was just an officer in the army, with nothing in the world but his pay. Mamma didn't marry because it was such a 'splendid chance,' such a 'grand match.' She loved him so well that she was content to give up home, parents, and country for him. I'm not very like her. I don't think it's in my nature to love like that, but still I am a Lonsdale, and their word is their bond. I am not going to swear to love a man I don't even commonly like. You married for love yourself, Aunt Kate, the same as my father and mother, and I can't think why you have grown so ambitious for me."

The Countess smiled.

"Really, Dot, you take my breath away! I know my brother was as poor as possible when Alice married him, but you know he got on afterwards. One or two unexpected deaths brought him to the family honours, and an old aunt left



him all her savings. As to us"—here she blushed very prettily—"I would have married Gay if he had not had a halfpenny; but then, you know, I was only the belle of an Indian hill station, and you are the beauty of a London season. The case is different."

"I am not beautiful. Grandpapa often says I can't compare with my mother."

"And," went on the Countess, resolved to do her duty properly while she was about it, "the very fact of your being a great heiress makes it desirable you should marry a rich man."

Dot opened her eyes.

"I should have thought it dispensed with the necessity. Why should money want more money, pray?"

"You are very provoking, dear!"

"I don't mean to be."

"Don't you see, Dot, you have over two thousand a year in your own right, that nothing can take from you? If you married against the wishes of all your friends, if your husband were the most undesirable man in the world, it could not affect your income. So long as you live you have the interest of fifty thousand pounds, and at your death you have the power of willing away the principal. Without the fact that you are the presumptive heiress of John Granger, the millionaire, you are a rich prize for any fortune-hunter."

Dorothy grew so pale and grave that Lady Netherton half regretted her warning. It was true, every word of it, but she would rather not have spoken it than see the hard, pained look settle on Dot's fair face.

"I think I understand," said the girl, wearily. "I must have seemed very stupid not to take it in before, but I quite see what you mean now. Lord Fane is so rich my fortune can be no temptation to him. If I don't marry him—or someone like him—you think I shall be courted, not for what I am, but for what I have. Do you know, it never came into my head before! People are so kind to me, and life seemed so bright, I just took the kindness that came to me, and believed in everyone. I shall know better now."

"Don't look like that, dear!" pleaded Lady Netherton. "You quite hurt me."

"I know you meant it kindly," confessed Dot, with a half sob; "but, oh! I wish you hadn't. I feel as if I should never believe in anyone again. Oh, Aunt Kate! why can't I be like Marion or Jessie! They have nothing to fear!"

Almost as she spoke the door was pushed open and the eldest of Lady Netherton's children came softly in.

Marion Duke was as little like one's idea of a small "ladyship" as could be. Nine years old, with four younger brothers and sisters—one nurse for all demands, assisted by a young nursery governess—it was not strange Marion had developed into a sober, trustworthy "elder sister" instead of a spoilt child.

She explained to her mother now with quaint, precocious anxiety that Miss Gray—the governess—was crying. She had a letter from home. Her mother was very ill, and she wanted to go home to her at once.

"You will let her go, mamma," pleaded the child. "We can manage without her if I dress the children."

Dot was laughing at this suggestion. Poor Lady Netherton struggled between kindly sympathy with the governess and anxiety about the well-being of her own flock deprived of her care. At last Miss Lonsdale said suddenly,—

"Let her go, aunty. It is the very thing, and I will take care of the children till she comes back."

"And your balls!" asked the Countess; "your parties—what of them?"

"Well, you know, it would be very awkward going anywhere just now, as I should be sure to meet him. A week's seclusion would really be the best thing in the world for me. I was going to propose I should go home for a week, but this will do just as well; besides"—and she raised her blue eyes pleadingly to her aunt's face—"I know I am not much use in the world. Do let me have the comfort of knowing I am doing something for once. You know you will be wretched if you keep that poor girl from her mother."

It was settled, as might have been guessed. Miss Gray went home in tearful gratitude, Dot was installed in the school-room, and the report that Miss Lonsdale was indisposed reached the gay circles where she had been so much admired.

CHAPTER II.

MR. ASHDOWN was taking a protracted holiday. He left London at Easter, and instead of the fortnight in Paris he had spoken of, had not returned a month later, when May was far advanced.

His absence was not particularly inconvenient. As head partner he could, of course, choose his own time for return.

Mr. Parry was by far the most active and popular member of the firm, and the absence of the chief merely threw a little more work on his shoulders, and drew him into rather closer relationship with the young managing clerk, Basil Rivington.

A childless man, with a wife who, though the apple of his eye, suffered so much from ill-health as to make it impossible for her to go about with him, Douglas Parry was just the man to need someone to make a friend of.

It was a real attachment that united him to Mr. Ashdown, and while that gentleman and his family were abroad there were many hours the lawyer would have found lonely had he not acquired the habit of making a companion of young Rivington, often taking him home to dine and sleep at the Richmond villa, which Mrs. Parry's gentle presence made so real a home.

Basil honestly liked the Parrys. He opened his heart more to them than to any other person; but so deep had grown his reserve since his mother's death that even they knew nothing of the thirst for revenge he cherished in his heart.

They sat together in the partners' private room discussing some knotty case, when Mr. Parry asked suddenly,—

"By the way, Rivington, where do you live? It never struck me till yesterday. If I wanted to send a telegram to you, or if you were ill and I sent to inquire, I shouldn't have the faintest idea where to find you."

"I never thought my private affairs could interest you."

The older man looked pained.

"I thought we were friends," he said, simply; "but even if you choose to regard our connection simply in a business light, I should like to have your address."

"16, Theobald-street, Kennington."

Mr. Parry started. A Londoner by birth, he had passed many years at Clapham; and it so happened, in his boyish days, Theobald-street had been a short cut for him on his way home from St. Paul's school.

Thus he remembered the locality perfectly; eminently respectable, no doubt, but far more suited to men whose whole resources amounted to a pound or fifteen shillings a week than to the young fellow opposite, whose income was larger than that on which many men marry and bring up a family in comfort.

"I suppose you are fond of tramways," he observed quietly. "I know many prefer them to trains."

"I always walk," returned Mr. Rivington, grimly; "I don't approve of wasting money."

"You must be saving it extensively, I should imagine, by living at Theobald-street. Why, in my time, lodgings there would not have cost ten shillings a week!"

"I pay six."

Douglas felt bewildered.

"My dear Rivington," he said, gravely, "no man admires thrift more than I do; but I think you are carrying it too far. Surely at your age—you must be nearly thirty—something of home feeling and comfort is needed in your abode, unless, indeed," and he laughed, "you are engaged to be married, and all this economy is practised that you may shorten the time of your probation; though, really, with your present income, I don't see why you should have to wait."

Many couples begin housekeeping on less. I did myself."

"I am not engaged to be married, and what is more, I never shall be. I have my club for all needful social purposes, and I have an object for saving money."

Douglas looked at him pitifully.

"You don't mean you're still labouring to pay your father's debts? I thought that task was ended long ago!"

"So it has. I don't see why I should not trust you. I am convinced that, sooner or later, a just retribution will visit John Granger. When he is ruined, and the property he unjustly seized falls into the market, I want to buy it. I don't care what sacrifices I make in the meanwhile. I don't mind if I live at Kennington till I am grey-headed. All I want is to die Rivington of Rivington."

In answer, Basil had expected some surprised remonstrance, some vehement censure of his scheme as Utopian. It dawned on him slowly he would rather have had either than the point-blank silence with which Mr. Parry regarded him.

At last he could bear the awful stillness no longer, and broke the pause himself.

"Of course I know I have little chance of success. Scrape and save as I will, it is well-nigh impossible for me to put by more than two hundred a year; and however carefully I invest my little hoard it is mere folly to think it would ever reach the lowest sum which would be demanded for Rivington Hall. It is my life's object, and it will fail. I shall live to see John Granger ruined and disgraced, but I shall never re-enter Rivington as its master."

"My dear fellow," said Mr. Parry at last, looking at the young man with deep contemplation, "you have brooded on your misfortunes until you have well-nigh lost your senses. You speak like a madman!"

Basil drew himself up proudly.

"Of course, I know it seems absurd to think of my ever being rich enough to buy back Rivington; but estates have been purchased by honest savings before now."

"I am not thinking of Rivington, but of yourself. There is nothing in the idea of your pinching yourself and making your life one long self-denial which would make me anxious. Many men before you have sacrificed their life's happiness to some such chimera. It is your wild talk about Mr. Granger makes me fear for your sanity."

"Of course you can't condemn him. He is rich, and so all men speak well of him; but even you can't deny he took advantage of my father's misfortunes to wrest his estate from him, and Rivington Hall is only his by a clever fraud."

Mr. Parry let the young enthusiast go on. He knew too well the good it would do him to speak of his injuries to check him; but when Basil stopped from sheer want of breath, he asked calmly,—

"What, in your opinion, was the right price of Rivington Hall? Supposing you were a millionaire (as John Granger was reported to be then), and you were about to purchase the estate, what would be your estimate?"

"A hundred thousand pounds," was the answer, given so promptly that Mr. Parry felt confident the question had often been raised.

"My father sold several farms. The income from the estate now is barely seven thousand a year; so the figure I have named would be a fair price. If it was a forced sale, though, I don't suppose it would fetch half."

Mr. Parry turned to him quietly.

"The price paid by John Granger was a hundred and twenty thousand."

"He never paid a penny."

"Pardon me, he advanced your father fifty thousand on the security of Rivington. When he took possession he had to pay another seventy thousand to free the estate from mortgages. From first to last he has paid twenty thousand pounds more than what you decided would be a fair price."

"I don't suppose he really paid the fifty at all. We never saw a shilling of it."

"Your father received it in bank-notes. I was present at the time. The greater part went to pay his 'debts of honour,' the rest was lost at the Derby the next week."

"At any rate, you can't deny Mr. Granger gloated over his misfortunes!"

"Did you ever see John Granger?"

"Never," and the young man flushed haughtily. "In the days when my father first knew him he was anxious to ask Mr. and Mrs. Granger to Rivington; but, of course, my mother would not hear of entertaining a shopkeeper and his wife."

"I never knew before a stockbroker kept a shop," remarked Mr. Parry, coolly. "I know your mother came of a high family, but what good did it do her? Have any of her grand relations ever held out a helping hand to you?"

"She had no relations nearer than cousins, and I don't require a helping hand at all."

"Well, let me finish. Basil, I don't often speak of the past. We have been associated in business for years, and I have never forgotten you were my old friend's son; but I did not speak of the old times because I thought it would only do harm. Now for this once you must hear the truth. Your father was a gambler; he had many splendid qualities, but his infatuation for gambling in any form was his ruin. To it he sacrificed wife, home, and son. He was well-nigh at the end of his course when he met John Granger; beyond lending him money at a far more moderate rate of interest than was to have been expected, and doing his best to dissuade him from ruinous speculations, Mr. Granger had no business dealings with him. They were fairly intimate. Your father had a wonderful charm of manner, and no doubt he was a very agreeable visitor at the stockbroker's house; but from first to last Mr. Granger never reaped any pecuniary benefit from the intimacy. So far from triumphing over his ruin, John Granger consulted us as to whether, if he forewent his claims, the estate could be saved for you. But there were so many creditors it would have been impossible. Instead of gloating over your sorrows both he and his wife sympathised with you, and they waited two full years after your mother's death before they took up their abode at Rivington Hall."

"Then they do live there?" said Basil, quietly; "I have often wondered."

"They have lived there ever since the time I speak of, and I don't think a kinder, simpler couple ever existed."

"They must have a dreary time of it," said Basil, "for, of course, no one would notice them or their unmanly children."

The lawyer smiled—he could not help it. He had been at Captain Lonsdale's wedding, and well remembered the beautiful vision who had called John Granger father. He had admired Mrs. Lonsdale extremely, but he had no mind to speak of her to Mr. Rivington, or to explain that her daughter was now the belle of the season. He only answered, quietly,—

"Society opened its arms to receive Mr. and Mrs. Granger very widely. Unfortunately they had no children; had they had a son there is no family in the county who would not have welcomed him as a bridegroom."

Basil Rivington sat so silent that the kindly lawyer felt alarmed.

"I am sorry if I have pained you, but, indeed, it is best you should know the truth, and not go on nourishing your prejudices."

Basil sighed.

"I can trust you," he said, slowly. "Answer me one question. Was there or was there not anything dishonourable in John Granger's dealings with my father? I don't mean as the world or as society counts dishonour, but as such men as you understand it?"

"Nothing."

"Then my life's work is at an end."

"Don't speak like that. You can't mean your life's work was revenge on Mr. Granger?"

"Yes."

"This is terrible."

"Think of what I have suffered! Think of these ten lonely years I led my father's ruin, my

mother's death, my own poverty, all as his doing. I think for years I have lived only in hopes of vengeance, and of once more becoming master of Rivington!"

"I don't see why you should give up the last aim."

"I thought you called it dreadful!"

"To hope to win it back through Mr. Granger's ruin—yes. But if you like to spend your youth in the dreary process of saving money—if to this end you give up pleasure, society, all such hopes of wife and children as make life dear—I say if you gave your whole soul to the work I believe you would find Mr. Granger a very just man. He would understand your desire to redeem your birthright, and sell Rivington Hall to you at any price estimated by a fair judge as its value."

Basil looked thoughtful.

"But you don't advise it?"

"I don't. You are eight-and-twenty now. Supposing Mr. Granger accepted a quarter of the price in cash and the rest remained on mortgage, think of the years you must toil before you could amass even the sum required for that! Really you would be forty or fifty before you were even the nominal possessor, and you would be an old man before the mortgages were paid off. To my mind it would be devoting your life to a shadow."

"I don't see anything else to live for."

"Then find something."

"I can't."

"You go out sometimes, don't you?"

"Oh, yes! I accept all the invitations I get. They are not many."

"Then surely somewhere you have seen nice, pretty, amiable girls?"

"Heaps."

"And would not one of them compensate to you for the loss of the Hall? Believe me, Basil, what you want is a wife and a home of your own."

"But—"

"Hear me out. Theobald-street can't be home. And so you have let all your aims and hopes centre in winning back the home of your boyhood. Believe me, Basil, if you took a small house and furnished it after your own taste, and when it was ready brought home a fair young wife to rule over it, in a year's time you would be able to think of Rivington Hall without a pang."

"I always thought matrimony was so expensive!" objected Basil.

"I suppose you have saved money?"

"Fifteen hundred; fancy only that in all these years—a mere nothing!"

"Nonsense! Settle the money on your wife when she is found—all that remains of it after furnishing your house, which will take two or three hundreds; then I will tell you a secret—or what was to have been one—Mr. Ashdown means to retire after the long vacation, and he proposes that the firm shall be known in future as Parry and Rivington. From next November, young man, you may expect a substantial addition to your income; so if you take my advice you will look out for a wife at once."

"It seems to be giving up all hope."

"My boy, you can't have both," said Douglas Parry impressively. "A happy home, a useful life now, or a lonely, self-engrossed existence, with perhaps the chance of Rivington in the future, you must make your choice. And now we must talk of business. It is late now, for we have gossiped unconsciously. I was to have gone to Lord Nethererton's to take him the latest letters about his case. I called this morning, but heard he was not expected from the country until six. Do you mind for once forsaking the delights of Theobald-street and calling in Mayfair for me any time after seven? You know all about the case as well as I do, so it will be the same as my going."

"I like Lord Nethererton," observed Basil quietly. "Things will go hardly with him if he loses his suit. He will be quite a poor man."

"Yes; and he has five children. They're nice people, and though lawyers ought not to have feelings I am sorry for them."

The clock was chiming eight when Mr. Rivington

knocked at Lord Nethererton's door, and the servant who opened it assured him the Earl would be at home in half an hour. He had been much vexed at missing Mr. Parry, and had gone out to escort the Countess to a concert. Arrived there he would leave her in the care of friends, and return at once if the gentleman would please to wait.

The gentleman did please, and was ushered into a small sitting-room where a lamp burnt brightly.

At first he imagined himself alone, and was beginning to turn over the leaves of a book on the table when a soft voice fell on his ear.

"So Cinderella married the Prince, and lived happy ever afterwards; and now, children, you really must go to bed, or what will nurse say?"

Through the green folding-doors there came towards him a young girl simply dressed in black, with two children clinging to her skirts.

They made a pretty picture, Basil thought. The girl was a governess, of course; her plain untrimmied dress looked like it. Besides, Lady Nethererton would not have left a visitor at home alone.

She half started as she perceived a stranger; then, after dismissing the children, she came back, and looking steadily into his face asked, "Are you Mr. Parry?"

"No; but I have come from him on business. I hoped to find Lord Nethererton."

"He will be home very soon now."

She sat down, and Basil followed her example. Clearly, since they were both inhabiting the same room, they might as well entertain each other.

"Do you know you recalled my childhood just now? I had not heard the story of Cinderella since I was a little boy."

"It is very pretty."

"And very sad."

"I suppose so," said the girl dreamily. "You see the world is so big, and there are so many Cinderellas."

It dawned on Basil suddenly she might be speaking of herself among them.

It could not be a very brilliant lot, surely, to perform homely duties in a fashionable family, and see continually pleasures and amusements coming in for others in which she had no share.

Basil wondered what kind of woman Lady Nethererton was, and whether she made the bread of dependence better for this blue-eyed girl, who looked a mere child herself.

"I suppose so," he said, after a pause; "but they can't all have a fairy godmother, can they?"

"Nor a little glass slipper!" smiled back Dot, who had quickly divined the young man mistook her for the governess, and was heartily enjoying his pitying tone of commiseration. It was so unlike the flowing compliments usually lavished on Miss Lonsdale, beauty and heiress! "I think that is the children's favourite part. The last time Lady Louise—she is four years old—had a new pair of shoes she cried bitterly because her mother wouldn't buy them of glass, like dear little Cinderella's!"

"You are very fond of children?"

He spoke as one who makes an assertion, not one who asks a question.

Dot smiled.

"Of these children. I don't think I have had much experience of any others."

"The first situation," decided Basil. "I wonder how she likes it?" Aloud—"Have you been with Lady Nethererton long?"

"Six weeks! I came to her when she left the country. I used to long to see London, but I was very much disappointed in it."

"Why?"

"I don't know—it is all such a whirl."

"And you are used to a country life?"

"Yes, since I came home; but I have only been four years in England."

"I should never have guessed you to be foreign—you look English."

"I was born in India, and lived there till I was seven years old; then papa's regiment went to Natal, and we stopped there till he died."

Basil imagined her a poor soldier's child, the daughter of a needy captain who died without

making any provision for her. How was he to guess Sir Henry Lonsdale had been only second to the Governor in importance in Natal, and this slim graceful maiden was his heiress!

"Then you must have felt the cold," said Basil, prosaically, "after living in India and Natal!"

"Oh, one gets used to things," said Dot, gravely, "and I am very fond of England; though sometimes, when I see anyone from Natal, it gives me a sort of strange pain here," and she touched her heart. "You see it is all so different here."

"Is Lady Netherpton a nice woman?" asked Mr. Rivington abruptly. "Her husband is a good sort of man—rather careless, you know, but very kind-hearted I should say."

Dot was on the verge of laughter—she really could not help it. It was an intense relief to her when a servant entered to say the Earl had returned, and forthwith Basil was marshalled to his presence.

CHAPTER III.

LORD NETHERPTON did not seek his niece. After more than an hour she heard the hall-door close, and learned from the servants he had gone out with the "gentleman from Mr. Parry."

"He will go on to the concert and fetch Aunt Kate," decided Miss Lonsdale to herself. "Well, he might have come and told me if there was any good news about the law-suit. Dear me, Miss Gray must have had a very dull life of it. I haven't filled her place—and it's only a make-believe filling at the best—for twelve hours yet, and I'm heartily tired of it. Am I getting spoilt, I wonder? I used not to mind how quiet things were. I was as happy at Rivington as at the grandest ball, and now I am grumbling because I have to spend a few hours alone. I wonder who that man was! Mr. Parry's partner, I suppose; but I always thought Mr. Ashdown was an older man. How he seemed to pity me! Perhaps he has sisters of his own, and wouldn't like the idea of one of them being a governess. Well, I do believe in all my eighteen years I never was an object for honest commiseration before. It's quite a new sensation."

Enter the Countess and her husband. Lady Netherpton went up to Dot and kissed her smilingly.

"You see," she told the Earl, "he has not eaten her up, though really it was a dangerous experiment to have been alone with her. Didn't you feel scared, Dot?"

Dot felt put out.

"I don't understand," she said, quietly; "you are talking in riddles. If you mean the gentleman from Mr. Parry, he was very pleasant company, so quiet and well bred."

"Tell her, Kate," laughed Lord Netherpton, "or she will go on praising her enemy."

"I haven't got an enemy," said Dot, complacently.

"Haven't you never heard of Basil Rivington, young lady! Don't you know that he cherishes an aversion almost equal to a Spaniard's hatred against your grandfather and his race!"

Dot had heard the story; had heard John Granger regret again and again the foolish mistake which made it impossible for him to befriend the young man. Dot had weaved full many a romance about the disinterested man, but she had imagined him gloomy and morose—so going about with hair half way over his shoulders, and a dress something between the costume of Banthorne in *Patience* and the Master of Ravenwood! It was bewildering to find he comforted himself just like the rest of the world, and looked not a whit different from any other young man of good birth and education.

"That Basil Rivington!" she exclaimed. "Why, I never would have believed it."

"I assure you I was in a nice fright," said the Earl smiling, "when I heard Parry had sent instead of coming, and that his ambassador was with Miss Lonsdale! I knew perfectly there was but one man in his office Parry would be

likely to send, and so Dot was entertaining her grandfather's foe."

Dot looked unusually thoughtful; she seemed taking the episode as something serious, while the Netherptons looked on it as an amusing adventure.

"Cheer up, Dot," said the Earl gaily; "there's no harm done. I don't suppose Rivington knows that Miss Lonsdale is John Granger's grandchild, and if he did he is too true a gentleman to be uncourteous to a woman. Did he talk to you or maintain a gloomy silence? You know it is a saying about him that he is never heard to laugh and rarely seen to smile."

"I think he smiled—once."

"Then he did not know your parentage!"

"He did not know I was Miss Lonsdale. It was an absurd mistake, of course; but he took me for the children's governess."

"Comedy in high life," said Lord Netherpton lightly. "Lawyer's clerk—disinherited gentleman—nursery governess—a great heiress—I hope you both sustained your parts well."

"I liked him."

"My dear," said the Earl to his wife, "had we not better note down that sentiment carefully; it is the first time in all my acquaintance with her that Miss Lonsdale has deigned to 'like' one of the opposite sex."

"I wish you would not be ridiculous," pouted Dot. "I mean just what I say. I thought him a very sensible young man—and I liked him."

"I had better give Fane and your other admirers a kindly hint that nothing but the profoundest sense goes down with your highness. They had better forsake the language of poetry and compliments and glean their conversation from blue-books and statistics in future."

But Dot was thoroughly put out, and she left the room without another word, or even the ceremony of good-night.

The Earl and Countess exchanged glances. These two understood each other so well they did not always need to clothe their thoughts in words.

"It would be a very suitable thing," said Lord Netherpton, slowly; "of course, he has nothing, but he comes of a fine old family, and has no ordinary talents."

"And poor little Dot is almost weighed down with wealth. Do you know, Guy, I should like it very much."

"Then say nothing about it; our princess is of a slightly wayward temperament, and will never do anything she sees is expected of her."

"My dear Guy, I was only speaking as one does of a castle in the air. Why, Basil Rivington detests her grandfather's very name. He would not marry a descendant of John Granger to save his life; besides, from all I hear of him, I should say he is the last man in the world to fall in love with an heiress."

"Need he know she is an heiress? Couldn't her little pastoral, begun by accident, be continued, and he know her only as your little nursery governess? Your niece is a problem to me, Kate! She has declined the best match of the season, and I confess I have two fears respecting her. Either she will fall a prey to some unscrupulous fortune-hunter, or she will fix her attention on some aristocratic scoundrel endowed with a handsome face. The old folks at Rivington can't live for ever, and the care of Dot will devolve on us. I must say I should like to see her safely married!"

"And there is nothing against this man except his poverty!"

"Nothing. Birth, character, taste, and education, all are blameless. Parry was talking of him to me only last week, and said he could find but one fault with him. His early misfortunes had made him old before his time, and that if he did not fall in love soon, he would be a confirmed old bachelor by the time he was thirty!"

"Well!"

"What does that 'well' mean?"

"What do you want me to do?"

"Nothing. How long is Miss Gray going to be away?"

"A fortnight. Dot's filling her place is, of course, absurd, but the children just idolise her;

and really I can understand her not caring to go into society so soon after the affair with Lord Fane."

"A fortnight! Good! I have invited Rivington to dinner to-morrow *en famille*. I want to have a long conversation over this law business. Suggest to Dot she may not care to meet him, and, unless I am mistaken, she will declare she is quite ready to do so, only she must not be introduced to him in her true character."

"But—"

"My dear, your *idiot* would be simplicity itself! You know Miss Gray often comes into the drawing-room of an evening, and I don't think we make her feel like an intruder. Set Dot to pour out tea, and without a word from either of us, Mr. Rivington will go on in his error."

Lord Netherpton must surely have had great acquaintance with his niece's character, for she did precisely what he foretold.

"Not meet him because he fancies grandpapa has injured him! Why it's absurd, Aunt Kate. If you think it would make you feel uncomfortable I'll not come in to dinner, but I shall be in the drawing-room after. I'll put on the plainest dress I have, and you need not introduce us, then he'll be sure to think I'm the governess!"

"Very well," said Lady Netherpton, gravely, "but don't flirt with him, Dot."

"I never flirted with anyone in my life," cried Miss Lonsdale, indignantly; "and I am quite sure Mr. Rivington is not the man to dream of such a thing. He is not in the least frivolous—a grave, rational individual, with plenty of common-sense, not an empty-headed coxcomb like Lord Fane!"

Poor Lady Netherpton, who had never seen the paragon so much bewitched by both her niece and husband, began to picture to herself a plain, cadaverous-looking man, who had some practical hobby (as drainage, ventilation, or temperance), and rode it unmercifully wherever he was.

She certainly did not look forward to her dinner the next night. But she was one of those large-hearted women who delight to show special courtesy to those on whom fortune has not frowned, and so she dressed herself in black silk in Basil's honour, and entered the drawing-room five minutes before seven, as pretty and attractive a matron as London could have produced.

"This is Mr. Rivington, Kate. He has been kind enough to throw some fresh light on our arguments in the lawsuit, and I have persuaded him to come here that we may talk over them in peace."

Lady Netherpton put out her hand and welcomed Basil with charming grace, but she was in extreme bewilderment the while, and felt inclined to charge both her husband and Dot with wilfully deceiving her. A "practical, sensible, young man"—a "grave, rational individual," that was how they painted the young lawyer.

Well, all that might be true, but how much they had left unsaid! Why, Basil Rivington was the handsomest man she had met that season, and his manners had a kind of courtly finish and dignified reserve, which reminded her of the old nobility of Paris.

Still she could hardly reproach her lord at that moment, and Dot was not there, so there was nothing for it but to lock her surprise in her own heart, and go in to dinner on Mr. Rivington's arm.

The repast was simple, but not luxurious. Everything was in perfect taste, but the meal remained a quiet family dinner, not a banquet.

Lady Netherpton rose almost directly the dessert was on the table, and said to her husband,—

"The children are not coming in to-night, as you have business to talk about. Coffee will be at nine, unless you would rather have it here!"

"By no means," said the Earl.

Then, as the door closed on his wife, the smile left his face, and he said, simply, to Basil—

"You will understand I have no common interests at stake in this lawsuit. I always knew losing it meant poverty, but I have discovered

through Parry, lately, that if we fall they can take every penny of my private fortune for the costs on the other side. I shall have nothing in the world left. The interest of my wife's fortune is two hundred a year, and we have little children. Of course I could get a diplomatic appointment abroad, but that would be little enough. I do not want Lady Netherton to suspect how bad things are. She is anxious enough now."

"She does not seem so."

"She has a hopeful nature. Well, after all, I must not grumble. I had nine years of perfect happiness before this wretched claim was started, and even if they make me a pauper I shall have my wife and children left!"

The conversation was long and earnest, but no talking could change the fact that things looked very unfortunate for the Nethertons; and when Basil followed his host to the drawing-room, he had become so engrossed in his troubles as almost to forget the doubt which had occupied his mind all the way to Mayfair.

Should he see again the slim, black-robed figure whom in his heart he called his little Cinderella?

One glance, and he knew she was there—the same black dress in its sweet plainness, and a trifle of fancy work in her hand. She dropped it as they entered, and rushed to the teatray.

Lady Netherton made no attempt to introduce her, but as she sat down to pour out the coffee said, gently,—

"You had better ring, dear!"

Basil's quick ears caught the last word, and concluded from it his heroine had, at least, no unkindness to put up with. Still, he thought, irritably, they might surely have introduced him.

It was trying, to say the least, he considered, with anyone whose very name he did not know; but for all that his eyes lingered on the fair face as he took his cup of coffee from her hand, and he felt grateful to Lady Netherton when, still without using any name, she asked the little governess to sing something.

"She has such a sweet voice," explained the Countess to Basil, when Dot had opened the piano. "She lived abroad until she was fourteen, so, of course, she has had but little training; still, no voice now seems to me so sweet. My little boy says the angels must sing like that in Heaven."

And as Dot's voice rose sweet and clear in that old but ever-touching ballad of "Auld Robin Gray" Basil decided he agreed entirely with the sentiments of Lady Netherton's son and heir.

CHAPTER IV.

A fortnight is not a very long space of time, counting by days or weeks, but it is astonishing how much can happen in it.

When poor Miss Gray was hurriedly summoned to her mother's sick bed Dorothy Lonsdale and Basil Rivington were perfect strangers, and, besides that, they were perfectly heart-whole and fancy free.

Both had a positive aversion for the mere talk of such things as love or marriage, yet before Miss Gray's leave of absence had more than half elapsed, Dot and the young lawyer were on the most friendly terms, and Basil at least had lost all intentions of perpetual celibacy.

A great many wise people would have condemned the Nethertons severely for letting such a state of things arise, but, as we have seen, the Earl and Countess were romantic, in spite of their small means and large family.

Lord Netherton thought the best thing that could happen to Dot would be to find someone who loved her for herself alone, and to be a pretty, graceful Countess.

There seemed to be a kind of poetic justice in love bringing back to Basil the old home which his father's folly had wrested from the Rivingtons.

Neither the Earl nor his wife would have done anything to prevent the pretty drama enacted under their eyes; but beyond letting Basil con-

tinue in his mistake as to Dot's position in their family, they really did nothing to encourage him.

It was more like one of those pretty toys which, once wound up and set going, requires no assistance from anyone.

Mr. Parry's plain speaking had opened Basil's eyes to the cruel blight he was bringing on his life.

He was just in the condition likely to fall in love when he encountered Dot telling the old tale of Cinderella to her little cousins. The mischief was done almost before Lady Netherton's little dinner, and it was accomplished beyond recall when the fair-haired girl sang the time-honoured ballad he had heard from his mother's lips in childhood.

He went home to Theobald-street hopelessly in love. Never had the meanness and dreariness of his abode so struck him.

How could he possibly have been contented to live there so long? What would Dot say could she see the place which for long years had served him for a home?

He caught her name that first night from the children. It was certainly peculiar they should be allowed to treat their governess so familiarly; but then she was little more than a child herself, and the same just suited her.

Mr. Rivington began to think seriously whether he should move at once. Whether he ever came any nearer to Dot or no he could never again be contented with those two wretched rooms.

"I am going to take your advice," he told Mr. Parry, frankly, the next morning when they were luncheon together, "and I only wish you had given it me years before. I have wasted a great slice of my life."

"Then you forswear revenge, and try to be happy without the Hall?"

"I am going to try and forget all in my life that happened before I came to your office; and, as a proof, I have given notice in Theobald-street, and mean to take rooms more suited to your managing clerk."

"And the other part of my advice—for someone to make a 'home' of the said rooms—what about that?"

Basil smiled.

"We shall see."

The lawyer felt his counsel had not been thrown away. The talk fell on business matters, and, of course, the Netherton case was discussed.

"I am glad you consulted with the Earl about it. The truth is, Basil, I have such a personal friendship for the Nethertons I am too anxious for the result to view things calmly, and weigh the pros and cons fairly."

"I dined there last night. Lady Netherton is charming. I suppose you know her?"

"Rather—considering she was my ward."

"Your ward? How strange!"

"She was not a great lady then, but the orphan sister of a young officer who had nothing in the world but his pay. He married the daughter of friend of mine, but his regiment was ordered to India, and so his sister was left at school, and for seven years her bright face was the sunshine of our home in the holidays. Fortune came to her brother again. He rose high in his profession, and came into the family honours. Kate went out to live with him and his wife when she was eighteen, but they only kept her for six months. She married just before her brother was ordered to Natal."

"India and Natal! That explains it then," said Basil, thoughtfully. "No doubt Lady Netherton knew her parents abroad."

"My dear Basil, what on earth are you talking about?"

"I was thinking of Lady Netherton's governess, sir. She told me she was born in India, and lived first there and then in Natal. I was rather surprised to see how completely at home she was with them all; but, of course, what you have told me makes it clear. I dare say Lady Netherton knew her family well."

Now, it so happened that Mr. Parry had been introduced to the real Miss Gray, an inestimable young person, with snub nose, sandy hair, and

spectacles. He knew, moreover, she had never been out of England in her life, and he saw at once his young friend was labouring under a mistake; but he was anxious to understand its nature before he set him right.

"They are pretty children, the little Dacies. Rather young for a governess."

"She is almost a child herself. They call her Dot, and Lady Netherton treats her something like a younger sister. It was only her dress and her being with the children told me she was the governess; besides, they never introduced me to her."

Mr. Parry saw the truth in a moment. He had never chanced to see Dorothy Lonsdale, but he had known both her parents, and could understand their child was likely to be rarely attractive.

That Basil had fallen hopelessly in love was evident; but what he would say when it dawned on him his divinity was not a needy governess, but the heiress of a millionaire on whom he had vowed vengeance, was hard to guess.

"I can't enlighten him," decided Mr. Parry. "I suppose the Earl and Countess know what they are about."

If they did not they were very rash, for they gave the young people a great many opportunities of meeting.

The Earl and Basil would often be shut up consulting over the papers in the great case for an hour or two in the evening, and Lord Netherton always brought in his young aide-de-camp for coffee and music later.

Then Lady Netherton discovered he lived alone, and invited him to spend Sunday. And one never-to-be-forgotten Saturday he was permitted to help her and the governess escort the three elder children to the Zoo.

In short, Mr. Basil Rivington was given all possible opportunities of falling in love with Dot, and, to do him justice, he availed himself of them zealously.

"Gay, how is this to end?"

It was two days before Miss Gray's return when the Countess made this appeal to her lord.

Mr. Rivington had been in for half-an-hour, and had never taken his eyes off Miss Lonsdale's face.

His secret was plain enough. But Dot's sentiments were a mystery; she was gay and sad by fits and starts. Her aunt had more than once surprised her in tears, and instead of taking any interest in her toilet for a ball at a noble duke's three days hence (when Lord Fane, having departed for Norway, there was no longer any excuse for secluding herself) she did nothing but declare she should not go; she hated dancing and would rather stay at home.

If Aunt Kate were tired of her she would go back to her grandparents. They would never be cross because she did not care for balls.

Lord Netherton looked perplexed at his wife's appeal, and, man like, strove to put the decision on her shoulders.

"I should say you had better speak to her. Rivington's safe to propose as soon as he gets a chance, and really I hope she won't fly at him."

"Why should she?"

"There is no accounting for her fancies. She was the sweetest girl I ever met, but this season has turned her head."

"What then?"

"Poor child! She has woke up to the knowledge she is a great heiress, and that much of the love and admiration poured out on her so lavishly is paid to John Granger's grandchild, and not to simple Dot Lonsdale."

"Well, you had better speak to her."

"But what am I to say?"

Poor Lord Netherton got impatient.

"I don't know. Tell her not to snap the young man's head off, for he is a fine, honourable fellow, and she must remember he might expect to redeem his fallen fortunes by a grand match. With his descent and his fascinations of mind and

person many an heiress would be proud to smile on him.

The Countess promised to do her best. She breakfasted in her own room the next day and sent a message for her niece, thinking thus to secure their *tête-à-tête* from interruption.

"I have a letter from Miss Gray, dear. Her mother is much better, and she returns to-morrow."

No answer.

"It has been so good of you to tire yourself with the children. I can't think what I should have done without you; but I am glad you won't be troubled with them much longer. You have lost a fortnight of the season already."

"I hate the season."

The Countess would not seem to hear.

"Lord Fane called for Norway yesterday, so there will be no fear of meeting him at the Duchess's ball. I have chosen you a charming dress, and I mean you to look your best."

"I don't want to go."

"My dear child!"

Dot began to sob almost hysterically.

"I think I am the most unlucky girl; everything goes wrong with me. Why wasn't I born a poor hard-working governess, like Miss Gray?"

"My dear Dorothy, I am very thankful you were not. Believe me, things are far better as they are."

"No."

"What is troubling you, dear? Won't you tell me why you wish yourself in the place of poor Miss Gray?"

Dot blushed hotly.

"I should have been happy."

"My dear girl, I don't despair of your being happy now, only tell me in what particular way being Miss Gray would have secured your happiness?"

Dot blushed.

"I should have thought you knew."

"Do let me know, Dot, and I promise to help you in any way you like. Tell me."

As poor Dot kept silence,

"Are you repenting of your answer to Lord Fane?"

"Oh, no!" most indignantly.

"Have you come to my way of thinking that a home of your very own, shared with some one who loved you dearly, would be a better fate after all than being the sunshine of your grandfather's house?"

There were deeper blushes than ever, but Lady Nether-ton quite understood the whispered almost inaudible reply meant "Yes."

"Well, then, I see no cause for tears. Basil Rivington is a lover of whom anyone in the world might be proud, and any stranger who had once seen him in your presence would know he worships the ground you walk on."

But even this speech brought no comfort to the fair, tearful face.

Dot sobbed on, and the Countess grew indignant with her.

"Really, Dorothy," she said, gravely, "I can't make you out. You must know that Mr. Rivington is only waiting for an opportunity to propose to you. If you can say 'yes' to him no one in the world will blame you, and we shall all rejoice in your happiness. Now, do tell me what you have to cry for!"

Dot dried her eyes.

The wholesome reproof had, at least, braced her for an explanation.

"He will never forgive me. He hates deceit. He said so to Uncle Guy last night. They were discussing some character in a book, and Mr. Rivington said: 'This one fault I could never pardon in deceit. All else might be forgiven, but trust must die when it has once been deceived.' Aunt Katy, every one of those words seem engraved on my heart. Till that moment I knew nothing of my own feelings, except that I liked to be near Mr. Rivington and hear him talk. It all came to me like a flash of lightning. I, who had never believed in love, had found my heart at last, and it was his."

"You have not deceived him. We never introduced you to him! It was entirely his own mistake to fancy you were the governess."

"But we let him rest in it."

The Countess held her ground.

"And even if we did that is our fault, not yours. His love can't be worth much if just that parts you."

Dot shook her head.

"In any case, it would have been a struggle between love and pride. He would have had to sacrifice many prejudices to marry me, but now it is quite hopeless."

"At least, you will listen to him?"

"I had far rather not. It would be much less painful never to hear he loved me than to have the offer of his love and then lose it again."

And that was all poor Lady Nether-ton could extract from her wayward niece.

"Keep them apart if you possibly can," was the last counsel to her husband. "Dot is almost knocked up with fretting. Really, if she goes on like this I shall feel inclined to send her back to Mrs. Granger."

But things never happen quite as people plan.

While the Nether-tons were striving to keep Mr. Rivington away from Dot, and yet not to fall in any hospitality to him, Miss Lonsdale took a sudden fancy into her head, which she did not communicate to any one.

She knew that she was rich. Her aunt had explained it to her; but in spite of Lady Nether-ton's information, Dot's ideas on the subject were very vague.

The idea came suddenly into her head that if only she could get rid of all her money before Basil proposed to her, she would be guiltless of deception, since "Dot," the only name he had ever heard applied to her, was really her own.

She had been well educated, but guarded with extreme care from all knowledge of sin and sorrow. Dot was about as destitute of worldly wisdom as her little cousins.

She was rich, and money was in the way of her happiness; therefore, clearly she had better get rid of it.

She was quite aware her grandparents and the Nether-tons would both refuse to help her; but she had read in the paper some of those specious advertisements, declaring that a certain firm gave advice on all confidential business, and arranged domestic matters with the utmost despatch and secrecy.

Clearly they were the people to help her, and though she had never been out alone in London in her life, and had not the slightest idea of the geography of the City, she set forth on her errand valiantly, though all she had to guide her was the address of a court in Fetter-lane.

It was a broiling June day, and Dot wore a light airy French costume, which, though just the thing for driving in the park, or making calls with her aunt, was out of place in the City, and thus Dot set forth for her interview with Messrs. Ball and Ward, of Blank-court, Fetter-lane.

A cab to Charing Cross was the first step. Had she only dared she would have taken it the whole way, but she was anxious not to call attention to her appearance at Blank-court, and so she plodded wearily on, the sun's fierce rays beating down on her—a tired, forlorn, little figure, already wishing herself safe back under her aunt's wing; and yet trudging bravely on in the one forlorn hope of freeing herself from what she felt would rob her of Basil Rivington's love.

She reached Fetter-lane after many an anxious inquiry, and turned down its labyrinth, but to find Blank-court was quite another matter. There were so many turnings, she was mystified; and some of them looked so unlike the places she was accustomed to, she shrank from closer investigation.

She was almost in despair when a drunken man, just sufficiently intoxicated to be quarrelsome, jostled up against her, and to her horror began a familiarly affectionate address. The whole place seemed going round and round with Dot. She felt she was going to faint, and yet she strove with powerful eagerness to retain consciousness. Then suddenly she saw a well-known figure, and with one gasping cry for

help she sank, fainting, into Basil Rivington's arms!

CHAPTER V., AND LAST.

WHEN Dot came to herself she was sitting in a small parlour, furnished in the style of shop-parlours generally, and the smell of cakes and coffee made her gradually aware she must have been carried to a confectioner's in Holborn—probably, since she was almost at that end of Fetter-lane when her fright occurred.

A young person in a very shiny black dress was waiting on her assiduously, and poor Dot swallowed at her bidding a glass of the very fiercest port wine before she was allowed to speak.

"You're better now," declared the attendant, cheerfully, "and the gentleman may come in. Dear me, I never saw any one so frightened as he looked when he brought you in. He wanted to send for a doctor, but I told him it was nothing in the world but fright."

Dot would gladly have protested she did not want the gentleman to come in, but as they must meet before she left the small, dingy-looking shop, perhaps it was better to get it over.

Would he be very angry? And oh! how could she answer him if he asked her what she was doing there alone?

But Basil asked nothing of the kind.

Very gently closing the door on the young lady with the shiny dress, he came up to where Dot lay on an ugly faded chintz sofa and took her hand.

"You are better now?"

"I am quite well. Oh, Mr. Rivington, how am I to thank you?"

He smiled.

"Shall I tell you?"

Dot had no mind to say "yes." She turned the subject from her gratitude to its cause.

"I was so frightened. I dare say it was foolish of me, but I felt terrified."

"Of course you ought never to have been allowed to come out alone; Lady Nether-ton ought to be ashamed of herself."

"It was not her fault. I never told her I was coming."

Still no questions, still no scolding; he only asked, tenderly, "Was that wise?"

"It was very foolish. I am always doing foolish things; but, oh! Mr. Rivington, I am so thankful you were there!"

"And so am I; I had been watching you for a few seconds. I felt I could not be mistaken in you, and yet I could not believe Lady Nether-ton would send you into the City alone."

"She didn't"—Dot was innately truthful. "By this time I expect she is wondering what has become of me."

"She must wait a little longer. I have something to say to you."

It was coming then.

"Don't scold me," pleaded Dot. "I never meant to do anything wrong."

"Do you know it is a fortnight to-morrow since I saw you first?"

"Is it?"

"A fortnight is not long, but it has been long enough to teach me two things. I love you better than all the world, and if I cannot win your heart I shall go lonely to my grave."

Dead silence.

"Dot, couldn't you learn to love me! I would take such care of you, my darling, and cherish you so fondly!"

Surely that shabby little room had never before listened to such a love-story!

"Don't," pleaded Dot, passionately. "I love you just as you do me, but you will hate me by-and-by."

Poor Basil looked bewildered.

"I am not likely to change, dear!"

"I know that," said Dot, ruefully; "I wish you knew."

"Dot!"

"If you were likely to change I need not mind what you said. Don't you remember you told the Earl you could never care for anyone who had deceived you?"

"But you are true as steel?"
"I am not; I have deceived you horribly."
His face grew deadly white.

"You don't mean that you have a lover, that you were going to meet him this afternoon? Child, for pity's sake, speak plainly!"

"I have not a lover, if you mean by that anyone I love—unless it is you; but for all that I have deceived you. I was going there this afternoon to see if they could help me."

He shuddered as he read the advertisement—at the mere thought she might have been brought into contact with the men who framed it.

"Suppose I help you instead! I am a lawyer you know. Promise to marry me first, and I will give you my legal assistance on any possible subject."

She shook her head.

"You have confessed, you see. Don't you think you owe it to me to explain why you send me away?"

"I don't send you—you will go."

"I shall never 'go' willingly. Now, Dot, what is the great secret that is to part us?"

"I am not Lady Netherton's governess. I was staying with her, and the real governess went away, so I helped with the children. You see," she persisted, "I have deceived you. I let you think me Miss Gray, and I am not."

"My dear child," said Basil, fondly, "as I want you to change your name for mine as soon as possible, I really don't mind particularly whether it's Gray or anything else at present, though why you should have been playing at governess I can't think."

"You see you made the mistake yourself first, and Uncle Guy thought you might object to come and help him if you knew my true name."

"Is it so very terrible? and who is Uncle Guy?"

"It is Dorothy Lonsdale; Uncle Guy is Lord Netherton."

"Dot!"

"I can't help it," pleaded Dot.

"Only you are the richest heiress of the day, and I am a hard-working lawyer. Oh! child, I thought you a penniless little governess whom I might take to my heart and cherish."

"I said you would go away," retorted Dot, "and I was going this afternoon to ask these people if I couldn't make the money over to Aunt Kate!"

"And that is the point you require legal aid upon! Oh! Dot, why did you turn out a great heiress!"

"I don't know," said Dot, with a sigh; "and there's worse to come."

"Worse what?"

"Worse drawbacks to poor little me. You will take up your hat and run straight out of the room when you hear it."

But though she said so she kept her hand in his, and it was not withdrawn as she told him that she was his enemy's grandchild, John Granger's heiress.

"Why don't you go; you will quite hate me now!"

"I expect Mr. Granger will insist upon your going. Oh! Dot, things are very hard upon us."

"If you think so," said Miss Dot, demurely, "of course you will forgive grandfather for living at Rivington Hall, and me for being his grandchild. If you could manage that, I really think we might be engaged in a few years' time."

But love was stronger than pride, and Basil Rivington frankly told John Granger of how he had judged him unjustly, and had been ready to seek his friendship even before he saw Dot's face.

The millionaire and his wife were delighted that their darling should marry the man she loved; and so it came about that when the golden corn became ripe and fall in the fields there was a wedding in the village church, and John Granger gave his petted grandchild to the man who through long years had longed for his ruin.

But Basil did not give up his profession. For nine months of the year he and his pretty wife lived in a charming house on the banks of the Thames, whence he could run up to town daily. For though love had conquered his pride, and suffered him to marry an heiress, he could not brook the idea of living on her money.

They had many friends, but never joined the ultra-fashionable society of London, both preferring the pleasures of home. And in the course of many visits exchanged, Basil learned to know and esteem John Granger very dearly, so that it was not without a pang that one grey morning, five years after his marriage, he read a telegram telling him that by the old man's death he was once more "Rivington of Rivington."

At his wife's urgent entreaty he resired then from the law, and devoted himself to the care of the estate he so loved.

There the Earl and Countess of Netherton (who won the law suit after all) and their children often visited the Rivingtons. There too, Mr. and Mrs. Parry pet a small Dot, who is their godchild; and a tiny Alfred, who recalls the friend of their youth; while a Basil Rivington the second already is the darling of the village.

Happy in his home, respected and esteemed by all who knew him, Basil Rivington never regrets the day when, at his old friend's pleading, he gave up his scheme of pinching and scraping to buy back his birthright.

[THE END.]

BEAUTY AND HER SISTER.

—101—

It was that pleasant time of all the year, when apple-trees were in bloom and the meadows were starred over with golden dandelions, and Daisy Ellerton sat in the window of the cottage, sewing, with her exquisite profile outlined like a cameo against the darkness of the inner room.

Somehow, Daisy Ellerton was always doing pretty things. Doubtless there were disagreeable services to be performed at Fernbank as well as elsewhere, but if anyone did them, it was not Daisy. Her old aunt, Miss Gaston, had been ill, and died there, but Daisy had kept well away from the invalid's chamber.

"I never could endure sick people," she said, with a shudder. "The very sight of medicine makes me ill; and the air is always so stifling, and invalids groan so, and make themselves so disagreeable."

"But, Daisy, they can't help it," said downright Mary, who had worked like a beaver.

"Well, then, they ought to," asserted the beauty.

And her systematic avoidance of life's unpleasantness was all the easier, because, as she herself remarked, Mary seemed to take to such things naturally.

Here she sat, the blonde-haired, blue-eyed, elder sister, stitching, in the pink reflections of the apple-trees, cool and tranquil, while Mary trudged up from the village, her face unbecomingly flushed, and her poor little patched boots covered with dust.

"Dear me!" said Daisy, critically surveying the newcomer, "how horribly hot and dusty you look! Did you get the French rolls?"

"Yes."

"And my note paper and postage stamps?"

"Yes."

"And the toilet soap? and coffee! I will not drink that miserable stuff they keep here any longer!" protested the spoiled girl.

"I have got them all," said Mary, putting her parcels on the table and stretching out her wearied arms to rest the muscles, "and a letter I got from the postman, too!"

"For me?"

"Yes, for you. Daisy, why does Mr. Corder keep writing to you every quarter, just the same as he did when Aunt Jane was alive?"

"I suppose he wants to be sure that we are not dying of starvation," Daisy retorted, with a short laugh.

"We are no business of his!"

"He was Aunt Jane's nephew. We are her nieces."

"But it's on the other side of the family. We are no relations at all to him."

"And it's no great loss to us, I imagine," said Daisy, with a toss of the fair head. "A

haughty, supercilious fellow, who has never taken the trouble to come up here and see us!"

"Why should he, Daisy? Oh, Daisy," exclaimed Mary, "what is that?"

For an oblong slip of paper had fallen out of the letter.

Daisy made a snatch at it, but she was too late. It was already in her sister's hand. She was looking blankly at it.

"A cheque!" she cried. "For twenty pounds! Daisy, why is Mark Corder sending you money?"

Daisy laughed discordantly.

"Oh, you goose," she cried. "It's for Aunt Jane's board and lodging and medical expenses."

"But Aunt Jane is dead and buried long ago. Oh, Daisy, you don't mean that—that he doesn't know it!"

"I do mean it," said Daisy, coldly. "I was told to send word to him, somehow I didn't. Aunt Jane surely made trouble enough when she was alive, without being an extra care after she was dead. And what do you suppose we were living on? Did you want to see me going out as nursery governess, or to take a place as general servant yourself? I never saw anyone so unreasonable in my life."

"But, Daisy, that was a falsehood—is a falsehood!" protested indignant Mary.

"Who has told any falsehoods?"

"To go on receiving money for the use of a woman who is dead, from a man who is a stranger to us—don't you call that a falsehood?"

"He needn't have been a stranger if he had behaved himself as he ought."

"Give me the cheque, Daisy. Let me send it back!" pleaded Mary.

"I shall do nothing of the kind. Mr. Corder will never miss the money. He's as rich as Croesus, and he is used to paying the sum once a quarter. Let him keep on!"

Mary's cheeks flamed, her eyes glittered.

"Daisy!" she cried, "I never could have believed this of you."

Daisy laughed and shrugged her shoulders. She had most aggravating ways with her—this angel faced young beauty, with the hair of gold and the eyes like melting blue jewels.

"It stings me to the very heart," said Mary, breathlessly, "to think that all these months I have been living on charity. But I will do so no longer. I should be afraid that Aunt Jane's ghost would rise up and haunt me. If you are going to keep up this theme of deceit, you must do it by yourself."

"Then," said calm Daisy, "there will be the more for me to spend. Much obliged to you, I am sure, Donna Quisote!"

"Yes," said Mr. Corder, doffing his hat to the tall, lovely girl, who was so like a pure tall lily, "I suppose I ought to have been down here long ago to see my good old aunt. But we city people have so little leisure. She is as well as usual, I trust?"

"Oh, quite," faltered Daisy, growing hot and cold by turns.

"May I see her?"

"I—I shouldn't like to disturb her," stammered the girl, the chill drops of sweat breaking out on her brow as she thought of poor old Aunt Jane lying in the shadow of the churchyard wall.

"No! Well, I'm sorry, but never mind. I daresay you understand her condition a deal better than I do. And you are the young lady who has been her guardian angel! Oh, you need not blush! Mr. Wrighton, the banker, has told me how faithful a nurse you are. We are both Aunt Jane's relatives. Does not that constitute a sort of kinship between us?"

He held out his hand with a frank smile.

Daisy's heart beat high with exultation as she gave him her own in return.

"And your sister! You have a sister?"

Daisy hesitated.

In such a network of treachery it was impossible to escape without a lie.

"My sister has left us," she murmured. "She—recently living on the money you sent us quarterly."

"As if it were not my duty to send it, your privilege to receive it," he cried. "Of all false pride, that is the falsest!"

"I endeavoured to convince her of that, but—"

"And she has gone away and left you with all the care of this infirm old lady on your hands?"

Daisy's eyelashes gradually sunk; her head drooped; but she uttered no word of disclaimer.

"I never saw such a Madonna face in my life," thought Mark Corder. "And she is my cousin, too, in a certain way. Why did Aunt Jane never tell me what a superb creature she was?"

As he pondered, he looked up at the porch roof, which was settled a little to one side; he observed a blind flapping hingeless in the wind.

"Things seem to be out of repair," said he. "I believe I had better prolong my stay a day or two, and give a little personal supervision to the place. You can tell me, I suppose, what needs doing?"

"I shall be so glad," said Daisy, "to be of use in any way."

If ever man was dangerously near the pitfall of love at first sight, it was Mr. Corder that night.

Daisy's heart throbbed; she was a keen observer, and she felt somehow that the supreme moment of her life was drawing nigh.

Mark Corder went back to the inn, after promising to call early the next day.

From Fernbank to the White Lion was a mile by the high road. Across the fields and past the little stone church, one could economise half the distance—"for them," as the old folk said, "as liked to go past dead folk a nights."

Mr. Corder entertained no superstitious on the subject; but he was a little startled when, in the light of the rising May moon, he saw a slight figure close by the wall, and heard something like a sob.

He paused. Just then the church door opened. Out came the grizzle-bearded sexton, with a lantern in his hand.

"Who is that, my man?" whispered Corder, motioning his hand toward the white, shadowy thing, that seemed a part of the quivering moonlight.

"Miss Jane Gaston's niece," the Sexton answered, in an undertone. "Not the pretty one—the brown-complexioned one. She was powerful fond of the old lady. She often comes here between daylight and dark, and brings apple-blows and wild-lilies and the like."

"Miss Gaston's niece! But who is buried there?"

"Why, Miss Jane herself, to-be sure—six good months ago. It were when the leaves fell, in November."

"Miss Gaston dead! My good friend, you must be mistaken."

"We're all liable to mistakes," slowly said the Sexton, "but I'm right this time sure, squire, for I dug the grave an' lowered down the coffin myself. Come, Miss Mary, dear," he said, raising his voice, "I'm going home now, and I'd be loth to leave you here in this gloaming all by yourself."

"Are you Miss Mary Templeton?" said Mark, advancing to meet the slight figure that flitted among the graves. "I am Mark Corder, and until this moment I have been in utter ignorance of my aunt's death."

Mary hung down her head.

"Until to-day," she murmured, "I thought you knew it all. My sister—"

"I know," said Mark, compressing his lips. "I have just come from there. And you—can I see you safe to your home? Is it far?"

"I am boarding with the Sexton's wife," hastily answered Mary. "When I found it out—that you were kept in ignorance, you know—I could not stay with Daisy any longer. I teach and do needlework, and earn a little for myself. Please, please, don't trouble to come out of your way, Mr. Corder."

She glided on in advance, Corder could not follow her against her will.

But walking behind with the Sexton, he soon learned all—Mary's devotion, her fidelity to

the poor old invalid, and Daisy's utter heartlessness.

As yet, however, no one knew of the crowning fraud by which the elder sister had managed still to receive Aunt Jane's quarterly allowance, and expend it for her own use and behoof. And Mr. Corder kept the secret.

He returned no more to Fernbank, greatly to fair Daisy's perplexity, but he often came down to the Sexton's dwelling. And one day he asked Mary Templeton to be his wife.

"But it can't be possible," said Mary, "that you love me. If it were Daisy, now—"

"But it isn't Daisy!" declared Mark. "Darling, do you think I can't see that white soul of yours shining through its casket like a pure pearl? It is you that I love—your own sweet self!"

"I dunno," said the Sexton, "whether folks know in the next world what's goin' on in this; but if they do, I'm master certain that old Miss Gaston is glad up in Heaven—that Miss Mary is married to Squire Corder. An' as for we down below—me an' my Betty—we're glad that Miss Daisy has got come up with as she deserves."

[THE END]

HIDDEN FROM ALL EYES.

—10:—

CHAPTER XIX.

UNCONSCIOUS of anything and everything, except that Limerick was carrying her like a bird over every obstacle that came in her way, Nella followed closely in Godfrey's wake, her heart beating fast with excitement, and her cheeks flushed like the first clouds of dawn.

The knowing hands, who were well to the front, were speculating if the vixen would be allowed to gain the Deepden woods; those whose horses were beginning to have enough of it, and had already dropped two or three fields behind, were praying devoutly for a check; but still the hounds streamed on, with their noses to the ground, in such a compact mass that they looked like a moving brown and white ribbon; the scent was breast-high across the grass-lands, and the pace was increasing at every hundred yards.

"Ware water!" shouted Godfrey, as Pearl took a brook in a flying leap. "Lift him gently!" as Limerick came over rather blunderingly, and he thought that his rider was coming to grief. "Now for it. Give him the head!"

There was a loud who-whoop, which showed that the hounds were up with their prey, and by a splitting gallop across the last field, they managed, to Nella's exceeding delight, to be in at the finish.

"Fifty-eight minutes without a check!" said Sir Edward, pulling out his watch; "and that last quarter of an hour was about as fast a thing as I ever was in in my life. Why, Miss Maynard, I hadn't an idea that you were behind me, or I shouldn't have had a moment's peace! Here, Deyncourt,—to the Master—"this is pretty good for a beginner, isn't it? It is this young lady's first day with the hounds, and she has made half the field look foolish already."

"Then I hope we may have the honour of presenting her with the brush!" said Colonel Deyncourt, courteously. "Here, Giles, be quick about it, man. We don't want to waste half the day!"

It was an animated scene, the hounds occupied the centre of a patch of grass on the edge of a pine wood, clamouring for their perquisites, as the fox was quickly broken up by the whip, the sun shining on the pink coats of the men and the glossy skins of their horses.

About fifty of the whole field had come up by this time; sandwiches and flasks of sherry or cherry-brandy were pulled out of saddle-pockets, and the morning's sport discussed cheerily over luncheon.

"You have done uncommonly well, my dear," said Sir Edward, coming up, sandwich in hand,

having dismounted in order to get on a fresh horse, which had been brought up by the groom. "I suppose you had somebody to take care of you?"

"I'm her chaperon, Sir Edward,"—and Mrs. Darcy laughed—"but I think your nephew performed my duties better than I did!"

"I performed my own and other people's," said Godfrey, coolly; "but I was not a chaperon in any sense of the word!"

"No, but you led me straight, which was all I cared for," said Nella, stooping down to pat Limerick's neck.

"Most women like the other thing."

"What do you mean, Mr. Somerville? Explain yourself at once," said Mrs. Darcy, looking up at him with an arch smile.

"I think it explains itself! What is the matter, Arkwright?"

"Have you seen anything of my sister. She hasn't turned up. I don't like it," he added, gravely, "for Dulcie was never one to give in."

"Where's Vere? he could tell you better than I can," with a glance at Nella.

"I can't see him anywhere."

"Some of the stragglers must have seen them," said Sir Edward, beginning to grow anxious and not willing to show it. "I'll go and ask."

He walked off to a group of farmers at a little distance, and came back in a few minutes, his kindly face much troubled.

"There seems to have been a fall of some kind, over that nasty bit of fencing on Bell's farm. They fancy it was a lady, but as there were two or three with her, they did not think it necessary to stop. My dear boy, don't look so scared. I dare say it was nothing of a spill!" though his heart misgave him as he thought of his own child.

"Look there!" said Somerville, abruptly, with his hand on Arkwright's arm, "Isn't that your sister's horse?" as the beautiful chestnut scampered wildly over the grass with broken reins.

Jack's face turned white,—

"Where—where can I find her?"

Several men good-naturedly went after the horse, but it was some time before Brakespeare consented to be caught.

"Please sir," said old Peter, touching his hat, "I think they must have taken her into that lonesome old tower."—Somerville gave a convulsive start—"for as I came along I saw two or three horses tied up alongside of the yew hedge!"

"Come along, Arkwright, we'll be off at once," said Somerville, eagerly.

"Are you coming with me?—that's awfully good of you!" exclaimed Jack, in surprise. His under-lip trembled, and he had a hard fight of it to preserve his composure as he rode down the field at a smart trot.

"You had better go home, child," said Sir Edward to Nella. "And I've half a mind to come with you."

"We are going to try the bushes—surely you won't desert us! 'Pon my word, I don't expect it's anything serious, or they would have sent up after Arkwright! Give it to me"—and the master took the brush from the huntsman's hand, and with a courteous bow presented it to Nella. "I hope it mayn't be the last time we shall go hunting together. I assure you the South Blankshire will always be proud to welcome its fairest and pluckiest member. Let me fasten it in your strap!"

Nella's heart fluttered with pride as she blushed most becomingly and murmured her thanks. To win the brush on her first day with the hounds was a triumph beyond her most ambitious hopes.

"She will never come out again with my consent," and Sir Edward shook his head. "I should have had a spill at my first fence if I had known any of my womankind were behind me."

"Then Miss Maynard will have to ride in front, and give you a lead," said Colonel Deyncourt, with a smile; "and you will be obliged to come after her, lest you should have to pick her up. We've lost too much time already, so good after

noon. I shall hope to see you both at Copplesstone, Gettford!" to the whip.

The pack moved off, followed by the rest of the field, and Sir Edward, with a sigh, turned his horse's head homewards.

"Fences in cold blood are double the size to when they are taken in the swing of a run, so we will go back by the road, my dear. I think it will be better to look in at the Tower on our way to see what has become of the poor girl."

They rode in silence down the road, fully occupied with their own reflections, the Baronet thinking of the day when his own daughter, the pride of his heart, was brought home to die, her pretty face drawn and white, her limbs as powerless as a baby's, and Nella was thinking of that fatal day which seemed to have cast a blight over her future.

Perhaps the mystery of the lonely Tower might be elucidated that afternoon, and out of Miss Arkwright's misfortune her own happiness might spring. Therefore she pressed forward with an eagerness that surprised Sir Edward, who, for his part, had a nervous dread of arriving and finding his friends in trouble. Peter followed behind them, leading Brakespeare.

"This is the place, I believe," said Sir Edward, as they reached the gate into Nun's Tower.

It was fastened, and there seemed to be no means of gaining admittance, for the bell was rusty and the wire broken.

Sir Edward knocked with the handle of his whip, and presently, to their surprise, Somerville came out of the bushes on the right, and offered to open the gate.

"These bolts are not often drawn, I fancy," as he stooped to pull them up; "they are rusty enough."

"How is she? What news?" cried Sir Edward, eagerly.

"Don't know; haven't found them yet!"

"But where's Arkwright?" as he rode up the drive looking sharply about him followed by Nella, who was wondering what Somerville had been doing down there under the trees.

"He's somewhere about. He went one way and I another. I suppose he found them, whilst I missed them. Curious old place, isn't it, on which we are trespassing so calmly!"

"Very; the dreariest spot I ever saw in my life. I should not fancy living here; the whole place is damp. There they are," pointing across across the lawn with his hunting-crop, "and Miss Arkwright is with them, alive and well, thank Heaven!" the fervour of his gratitude showing how deep his anxiety had been. "What shall we do with our horses? Peter can't hold them all."

"I shouldn't get off if I were you. There is no object in staying."

"All right; I'll remain where I am. Just you go on, and tell them that we are here."

Nella felt a feverish desire to join the rest and hear what had happened, and Somerville seemed for once ready to oblige her, for he offered to tie up her horse under an evergreen oak. She willingly assented, and sprang to the ground, before he could assist her.

As they approached the group she noticed that Vere was holding Miss Arkwright's hat. Mr. Mallon was nowhere to be seen, and Jack sat by her side, with her hand clasped in his.

"Nothing serious, after all!" he cried cheerfully; "and we've lost our sport for a trifle. These two good Samaritans, Vere and Mallon, picked my sister out of a ditch, but she hasn't a broken bone or anything in particular the matter with her."

"Did you come with my cousin?" said Vere, turning to Somerville.

"No; we rode in together—I told you so," cried Jack, before the other could speak; "but Somerville whipped off his horse and dashed into the bushes as if he were mad."

"I thought Miss Arkwright might be in that direction instead of this," he said, coolly. "My uncle told me to tell you that he was delighted to hear that you were all right, Miss Arkwright, and the sooner you got home the better," drawing on his imagination for the last part of the message, as one of his auditors was aware.

"But how am I to get there without a horse? They say Brakespeare has run away."

"Peter has got him over there; don't you see him?" pointing to where Sir Edward and the old groom were waiting.

"Oh! I am so glad. I was terribly anxious about him."

Still she seemed in no hurry to move. Somerville's eyes went anxiously round the place.

"Where's Mallon?"

"Gone to look after the horses, I fancy."

Cyril Vere stepped closer to Dalcie, and held out her hat, hoping thereby to hide her too-evident agitation, for the suspense was becoming intolerable, and she could scarcely keep from trembling.

"We should have seen him when we came in. I had better look him up."

"Mr. Somerville," said Dalcie, eagerly, "would you pick up my veil?"

To Nella's eyes it looked as if she had thrown it down on purpose.

Godfrey stooped, and having picked it up, placed it on her lap, muttering ungraciously,—

"I thought this was Vere's office."

But instead of being offended, Miss Arkwright looked up at him with her sweetest smile.

"Would you mind holding it whilst I put on my hat? Directly I move it is sure to slip down."

Inwardly cursing, Somerville did as he was bid, whilst Vere strolled off towards the house as if he were going to speak to Sir Edward, and Jack went to look after his horse. Mad with impatience to get away, as he saw Cyril turn abruptly to the left and disappear into the bushes, and yet afraid of committing himself if he betrayed the smallest interest in his movements, Godfrey was nearly beside himself.

Did a woman ever take such a time to put on a hat before! He could have dressed himself over and over again from head to foot. He bit his lip, and ground his heel into the grass.

Nella stood by, looking on in wonder at the comedy or tragedy—for which it was she could not tell—which was being played before her eyes. Cyril had not chosen to let her into the secret, so when Godfrey turned to her with a mute appeal, understanding that he wanted to get away, she stretched out her hand for the veil, and said, quietly,—

"You are waiting to see after Pearl?"

He thanked her with a glowing glance, murmured something about "getting loose," and departed, deaf to Miss Arkwright's cry of "Wait one moment, and I shall be ready!"

"Oh! Miss Maynard, why did you do it?" in bitter reproach.

"What? I don't understand," stammered Nella, who had been feeling rather ill-used.

Dalcie's only answer was a flood of tears!

CHAPTER XX.

CYRIL VERE darted along as fast as he could, so soon as he had got within the friendly shade of the bushes, and reached the house in time to see the gaunt figure of Sarah Prendergast on the steps in the act of placing the key in the lock. Where had she been, he wondered, as he called out,—

"Have you got such a thing as a needle and thread?" determined to say anything he could in order to detain her.

"They wouldn't be any use to you if I had."

"The lady has torn her habit."

"Then she had better go home and get it mended," opening the door, with the evident intention of vanishing inside it.

"But she has some way to ride, and—and it's very awkward," trying to blush, as if the rent were truly dreadful.

"You needn't look at her," with a grim smile.

"But she's so pretty!"

"None the better for that."

"But every woman has a needle and thread," persuasively.

"And if I got 'em there would be half-an-hour spent on the mending."

"Not five minutes!"

"Well, as I said before, I'm not going to get 'em. I can't be philandering about all day, so there!"

And the door was so nearly shut that he could scarcely stop it by means of his hunting-crop.

"Bat, my good woman," he began again, in an agony lest she should go in and discover Mallon in the midst of his researches, "you really can't be in such a hurry as I am. I'm miles away from home, and longing to get there; but you won't tell me how much I owe you for your hospitality."

"As I told you before—nothing!"

"But that is impossible."

Mrs. Prendergast turned her head over her shoulder. She was evidently listening to some noise behind her.

Vere redoubled in his eagerness, and became almost pathetic in his entreaties.

"If you won't take it, perhaps your little daughter will who gave me this flower!" pulling the paper-rose out of his pocket, where he had discreetly hidden it.

The woman darted a quick look of suspicion into his face.

"The money would do her more harm than good. There's something moving, I'm sure."

"Only your daughter at play."

"She's not there, but"—her expression changing into one of sudden anger—"if any of you gents come to spy on a lonesome woman I'll hand you over to the police, that I will!"

Then she banged the door in his face, and he was left once more alone on the steps. He looked up at the window from which the rose had fallen, but it was closed behind its iron bars, and no one was there.

Listening intently he could hear no sound, except that of a hurrying footstep, which probably belonged to Sarah Prendergast.

What could Mallon be doing?

Then Sir Edward shouted out, asking what they were waiting for. He ran up to him and advised him to ride on, as they were coming in a minute; then, catching sight of Somerville, he rushed after him, resolved to stop him at all hazards.

Godfrey turned round to face him.

"Well, what do you want?"

"Only to suggest that we had better go on, and leave Mallon to follow when he chooses."

"Just as you like," said Somerville, carelessly. "He is your friend, not mine."

"We have kept Miss Arkwright long enough."

"Yes, I don't know what you were waiting for."

"Queer old place this," looking up at the ivied tower. "Ever seen it before?"

"Yes, once!" looking him straight in the face.

"Ah! that was the day that Limerick ran away!"

"How do you know? I never said so!" In the midst of his impatience remembering to smile in a way that made Cyril long to kick him, as he thought of the suspected assignation.

"I saw you come out of the gates!"

"You did! Then you saw that I was not alone."

"No, my cousin was with you, though how she came there—I frowning hard—"I cannot tell."

"A runaway horse!"

"Yes, with you on the spot to meet her!" in bitter contempt.

"Remember, I told no tales."

"It would not matter—I am like her brother!"

"Very convenient this sort of fanned relationship to all the prettiest girls in the neighbourhood"—with a sneer—"brother to Miss Maynard!" and what is it to Miss Arkwright?"

"I think Miss Arkwright will wonder where we are," taking no heed of his insinuations.

"Then why don't you go to her! She only tolerates me when she has no one else!"

"Where is your horse?"

"Over there!" nodding towards the stables.

"I collared a stable-boy and got him to hold it."

"At this rate we shan't get home in time for dinner," biting the end of his moustaches, afraid to go lest Somerville should take advantage of his absence to get into the house, afraid to stay, lest his motive might be suspected.

"Certainly not, if you stand there mooning. Let us get off, for goodness' sake! The place is damp and miserable enough to give one the blues!"

"Do you know if anyone lives here?"

"No, I know nothing about it, except what I told you the other night."

"How did Pearl carry you to-day?" strolling towards the stables, so that Somerville felt obliged to follow.

As soon as their backs were turned, Mr. Mallon slipped through a narrow window, from which he had contrived to loosen the bars, and let himself down into a clump of evergreens. There he waited for a moment, listening to every sound. Finding that the coast was clear, he made his way to the spot where the horses were tied up, and leading them through the open gate, appeared suddenly before the two girls.

Dulcie gave a convulsive start, and then, without asking him what he meant by keeping them so long, which Nella felt much inclined to do on her own account, went up to his horse, and patted his neck as if she were very fond of it, which was odd, as it belonged to a stranger.

Jack came up and shouted out to Vere, and gradually the whole party assembled in front of the tower.

"Did you find her?" Dulcie contrived to whisper breathlessly, as Mr. Mallon, having surrendered his own horse to the care of Peter, came forward to help her on to Brakespeare.

He shook his head—"The doors were locked."

Her face fell in bitter disappointment, as she stopped with her hand on the pommel. "Then it was all for nothing!"

"Not quite," in a louder voice, "I think your stirrup wants lengthening." Then in a whisper, "I have some evidence to go upon. Oh, Dulcie, is this the last time?"

She let her hand rest for a moment in his tight clasp, as he pretended to be arranging her skirts.

"On Tuesday you must."

"Is it safe?" looking up into the face which had haunted his dreams, and knowing that whatever happened he could not keep away.

"Come!" That was all she said, with the tears in her hazel eyes, and if death had been waiting for him on the threshold of Despedes, it is probable that he would have gone all the same.

Somerville put Nella on Limerick's back, Vere standing aside, as if it were his rightful privilege, and he could not interfere. Then Sir Edward called out that he could not wait any longer; and bidding Miss Arkwright good-bye, and congratulating her on her fortunate escape, was the first to start. Nella meekly followed, with Godfrey by her side. The two other men lingered till the last moment with the Arkwrights at the gate, and kept in the rear for the rest of the way, talking earnestly together.

As they passed close to the yew-hedge, Nella's quick ears caught the sound of a cry, and looked round.

"What was that?"

"Only the parrot. You have heard it before!" speaking in almost a whisper, and leaning forward as if they were exchanging tender confidences.

Thinking of Cyril following close behind her, she urged Limerick forward till she was side by side with Sir Edward. He talked to her pleasantly, rallying her on her plump, but adding very seriously that he did not know if he could ever allow her to come out again.

"What should I do," he said, gravely, "if you were brought home as my poor girl was?"

"It wouldn't matter!" looking wistfully up into his kindly face, and wishing that she had a father just like him. "There is no one to care about me."

"Bless my soul, what will you say next! You are likely to break hearts enough to satisfy a

Cleopatra—ah, Godfrey, what do you think about it?"

"She'll try, like all women; but perhaps she will break her own instead."

"Well, I never!" exclaimed his uncle, "I think you might have said something prettier, but an engaged man is no authority."

"I don't see that," sullenly, "I can keep my eyes open!"

"Yes, but you mustn't use them, except on your own property."

"At all events, Mr. Somerville knows nothing about it," with a slight toss of her head.

"A great deal more than you do," in an undertone.

"May I ask how?" in supreme contempt.

"You may ask."

"Oh, never mind, I know you couldn't tell me."

"I am not going to. Look here, Nell, you did me a good turn to-day, and I'll remember it."

"Thank you, Mr. Somerville," with an emphasis on his surname.

"Don't get on your high horse, or you'll have a tumble."

"Vere, it was a thousand pities that you lost the end of the run," Sir Edward called out over his shoulder. "I almost wonder that you didn't come after us when you found that Miss Arkwright was not hurt."

"It was very hard to keep away, but when a girl faints you can't tell if she's done for or not, and it would have been inhuman to leave her."

"Of course. We must persuade Mr. Mallon to stay on for a day at Coppilstone, and petticoats must be laid under a ban. It was bad enough for you a friend, but worse still for Mallon, being a stranger."

A peculiar smile flitted over Mr. Mallon's face.

"You are very good, sir, but I don't know when the meet is!"

"Next Tuesday; you can stay till then!"

"The day of the ball, you know," put in Somerville. "I can't answer for Miss Arkwright being there."

Mr. Mallon looked as if he did not hear him, as he answered quietly,—

"If you will let me, I shall only be too happy."

After that they rode home through the darkening lanes in comparative silence, everyone busy with his own reflections.

CHAPTER XXI.

"It has not been such a satisfactory day's work as it might have been,"—and Cyril Vere stretched himself on a lounging chair in his friend's room—"but, after all, we haven't wasted time."

"What have we got by it?" said Mr. Mallon, dejectedly.

"Evidence that Robina Somerville is not dead!"

"We may guess it, but we do not know it."

"When Miss Arkwright heard her speak is there anyone else who would be so likely to say 'Victor, I am waiting!'"

"I would have given anything on earth to hear her. It was exasperating to be so near, and yet to miss her!" and he clenched his hand in bitter longing.

"The question is, what became of her when you were in the house and I outside? Are you sure the place was empty?"

"I ran upstairs and down, rapping at every door that I couldn't open. There were only two or three rooms into which I could get. The place was cold enough to starve a rat"—shivering at the recollection of it—"stone passages, stone stairs, and every fire looked as if it were ashamed of being there, hidden behind a grating. There were beads and all sorts of trumpery on a table in the room where I picked up this handkerchief"—looking for the hundredth time at the initials "R. S." in the corner—"and some paper flowers like the one you've got in your pocket. I

tell you what it looked like more than anything else—a nursery!"

"A nursery!" Cyril looked aghast.

"Yes, it would be a joke, wouldn't it," with a joyless laugh, "if, after all our bother, we had only unearthed a hidden Mrs. S!"

"Somerville wouldn't enjoy it. If I had only stayed where I was"—frowning with vexation—"instead of running after that old woman, I should have had him on a piece of toast!"

"The old woman saw her, I suppose, when she threw down the tray."

"Yes, and doubled like a hare when she found me on her track. Instead of following on a wild-goose chase to the harbour I ought to have made straight for the house. By-the-bye, did you see anything of the menagerie she talked of?"

"There wasn't a living thing about the place—except a blackbeetle, which I trod on in the kitchen."

"I should like to have seen what started Somerville off directly he arrived. Even Jack, who knew nothing, thought he was in a dence of a hurry."

"If he found her in the grounds what did he do with her? We were all about the place, and Sir Edward was just riding in at the gate."

"I can't see anything for it, except strangling and burying on the spot," with a slight smile at the absurdity of the supposition.

"Scarcely likely, as he was always fond of her."

"And you?" ventured Cyril, who had long been curious to know the real state of his feelings.

"I thought her the bonniest, most winsome little girl I had ever seen"—looking dreamily up at the ceiling—"till I saw Dulcie. She had the tenderest heart in the world, which got in her way when she wanted to be a man to please her brute of a brother!"

"It's the strangest story I ever knew!"

"Yes; and to think we have the key of it close at hand, and yet can't get to it. Isn't it enough to drive a fellow mad!" resting his elbows on his knees, his face on his hands.

"But we shall," remarked Cyril, with quiet conviction.

"I doubt it. I almost wish to Heaven I hadn't tried. It is so hard, so infernally hard, on Dulcie."

"Nonsense, it is her salvation. A ray of hope is worth everything!"

"Not when it's a mere sham. It would have been better for her if they had hanged me straight off."

"Much better!" sarcastically. "A bit of hempen cord instead of a ring, as a remembrance."

"Perhaps by this time," staring moodily at the fire, "she would have consoled herself with you!"

"With me!" opening his blue eyes to their fullest extent, "whatever put such an idea into your head?"

"It doesn't seem unlikely—you are great allies already."

"Only on your account. She would have made friends with old Nick if she could have got him to serve you."

"And yet," with a softening smile, "I've done nothing but ruin her life. She was as happy as the day, the prettiest girl in the county, lots of tin, heaps of friends, splendid health, a comfortable home, and nothing left to wish for. Vere, when I think of it, I seem such a brute that I scarcely have the courage to go on living. If they won't put me out of the world I think I ought to do it for myself."

"And rob her of the only reward she can ever have for her devotion! Dear old man, you are not yourself to-day," getting up and laying his hand affectionately on his friend's shoulder. "Do you know, instead of moping here, you ought to be mad with joy to think you've seen her."

"And to find she's just the same, not a bit altered. I thought she would have laughed at my ridiculous get-up, but she never seemed to notice it," his voice growing husky, "and the tears were in her eyes instead of laughing."

He passed his hand over his brow and started to his feet, as if his feelings were too much for him. There was a long pause.

"Vere," he said gently, looking down into the



MR. MALLON CAUTIOUSLY MADE HIS WAY TO THE SPOT WHERE THE HORSES WERE TIED UP.

could. "If I have to give up, I can trust her to you. I think you are the only other one who could make her happy."

"I would do my best; she should never want a friend."

"Wouldn't you marry her?" in astonishment.

"My dear fellow," with a short laugh, "matrimony is too great a luxury for paupers; besides, to tell you the truth, I would rather have a girl who liked me, and not you. But this is utter waste of time, like quarrelling over a will before the testator has made up his mind to slip the hooks. What are your plans for to-morrow?"

"To take a ride, and have another prow!"

"Humph! How shall we manage to keep Somerville out of the way?"

"Get your pretty cousin to talk to him, and there will be no difficulty."

Cyril bit his lip. "Jack told me yesterday that he was to marry the heiress, but I think he must be mistaken."

"What! the plain, simple-hearted Meta! He doesn't even take the trouble to spoon her; but if you don't want him to marry your cousin you must keep your eyes open!"

"No use," with a deep sigh; "It has gone too far."

"She told me yesterday that she hated him."

"Impossible!" his face brightening.

"She said so in so many words," moving a coal with the toe of his boot; "it would be a good match for her in one way, but if you don't want it why in the world do you do your best to help it on?"

"I don't know what you mean."

"Well, from her point of view, what can she have thought of your conduct to-day? It was awfully good of you, but I dare say she did not like it. I shouldn't in her case."

"What have I done?"

"Nothing—at least for her—you've left her entirely to other people. What possessed you to ride off with Mrs. Darcy and leave the poor little thing either to Somerville, whom she hates, or to me, a stranger?"

"I don't know; I knew she didn't want me."

"I am not so sure. She was looking very down in the mouth."

"What stumps me is that you could have time to think of other people, when, goodness knows, you had enough on your mind already."

"I'm such an unlucky beggar, myself," with the sad smile which had a curious fascination of its own, in spite of his disfiguring disguise, "that I feel an affinity with everyone that looks as if the world were going wrong. Your cousin struck me as not easy in her mind, and I begin to think you had something to do with it. Treat her better for the future, she is pretty enough to make it a pleasant duty."

"I would stick at nothing to make her happy; but there's the rub," he added, with a sigh. "She encourages that brute Somerville, and snubs me."

"She had no other alternative between his devotion and your neglect. However, do as you like, I've made mess enough of my own life. I had better not interfere with other people's."

"It wasn't your fault in the least," said Cyril, warmly, "except, perhaps, that you made love to two or three girls at once."

"I don't know that I did. Poor little Robin I loved like a sister. In that horrible house there was a picture of a Robin-red breast, cut out of the *Illustrated*, hanging over the mantelpiece, that made me feel sure she was somewhere about. It is incredible to think that, with all of us on the look-out, none of us could find her!"

"I fancy there must be some place in the grounds where Somerville shut her up; but, good gracious, we shall both be late for dinner," looking at his watch.

"I had better ring for Rivers," stretching out his hand to the bell, "or my artistic toilette will come to grief. Good heavens!" catching sight of his red hair in the glass, "to think that I could show myself to Dalce, looking such an object as that!"

"Miss Arkwright did not seem to mind," and Cyril walked off to his own room, thinking that

these two lovers, so united in their sorrow, weren't half to be pitied, after all.

By the time he finished dressing he almost arrived at the conclusion that if Nella were only as fond of him as Dalce Arkwright was of Victor, he would scarcely mind being hanged, drawn, and quartered for her sweet sake.

She must think of him sometimes, when she went about with his watch-chain hanging at her side, and yet it could not keep her true to him, or prevent her from making an assignation with another lover in the lonely grounds of Nun's Tower. "Women are the most puzzling things in creation," he thought to himself, as he tied his tie in a minute bow—"if you are civil to them they give you a snubbing; if you leave them alone, you are a wretch, and they marry. Which tack am I to try to-night? By Jove, if I only had the needful, wouldn't I cut him out!"

(To be continued.)

MARRIAGE has no religious element in Burmah. There is no marriage ceremony. Just as two men go into partnership in business, so a man and woman may enter into the marriage state without undergoing any form. Coupled with this very secular nonchalant view of marriage is the fact that facilities for divorce are very great. As marriage is merely a partnership, so divorce is a dissolution of that partnership, and may be obtained on demand by either of the parties from the elders of the village. In Burmah, however, as elsewhere, we find that *a priori* dangers are largely neutralized by practical good sense. The fear of outraging public opinion furnishes a powerful motive to propriety of life. The salvation of the Burmese woman lies in the fact that her home-life is always the centre of her life. She recognises that there are certain restrictions on a woman's actions which must be observed as long as men are men and women are women.



SYBIL CAREFULLY DROPPED THE CONTENTS OF A GLASS PHIAL INTO THE CENTRE OF THE ROSES.

REDEEMED BY FATE.

CHAPTER XXI.

DOCTOR CLIFFORD—a hearty, good-tempered-looking man of about thirty-five or six—came in the afternoon and had a long interview with Muriel, after which he proceeded to the studio of Philip, with whom, as has before been stated, he was rather intimate.

"I confess," he said, referring to Lady Urwicke, "her case somewhat puzzles me. She is, without doubt, very unwell, and yet I can find no traces of disease."

"She ascribes her indisposition to the weather," Clifford shrugged his shoulders.

"As people are apt to do when they are unwilling to confess themselves ill, as Lady Urwicke is. There is something more serious the matter with her than that."

Thinking it might perhaps aid his diagnosis, Philip described the attack he had witnessed that morning, not omitting to mention the froth on the lips; and the physician looked graver.

"Strange!" he observed, drumming his fingers meditatively on the table. "This only makes the affair more complicated. However, I cannot say anything definite now, but, perhaps, after to-morrow I shall be better qualified to give an opinion."

He sent some medicine that same afternoon, and when he arrived the following morning found Muriel wrapped in her dressing-gown and reclining on the couch.

"I felt too tired to sit up," she said, languidly, as if to excuse herself, as he came and took a seat close beside her.

"You ought to have remained in bed, you are really too weak for the slightest exertion," he remarked, gravely, laying his fingers on the delicate wrist, in which the pulse beats were so feeble and intermittent.

She shook her head and smiled.

"I hate lying in bed. Surely you can give me

something that will put a little more vigour in me, and do away with this horrible feeling of lassitude."

"I will try my best, at all events," he answered, replacing his watch; "but you must aid me by obeying my directions—the advice of all the doctors in the world will do you no good unless it is followed! Do you sleep well?"

"Very well—in fact, too well, for even in the daytime I am conscious of a sensation of drowsiness."

"Ah! and your appetite you said was not good. Now tell me what your diet usually is, and more especially what it has been for the last week or so."

She complied; he listened very attentively while.

"Of course you require more nourishment than you seem to have taken," he observed, as she concluded; "and abstaining from meat is lowering, still—"

Still, it hardly accounted for her prostrate condition, and the physician paused in perplexity. He was not a fashionable London doctor, accustomed to have his words regarded as oracles, and content himself with receiving a couple of guineas for scribbling off a prescription, after which all thoughts of the patient vanished from his mind; besides, being eminently conscientious, he was devoted to his profession, which was, indeed, all he lived for, for he was a bachelor, and had neither kith nor kin in the world.

Lady Urwicke's case, while presenting as yet no alarming features, baffled and interested him. "You are naturally delicate!" he asked.

"Oh! no; I look so, but, as a matter of fact, I believe I am pretty strong. I have never had an illness in my life."

"That is what few people can say, even at your age," he remarked, cheerfully; "and we must endeavour that you should retain the enviable distinction. Still, under all circumstances, it is better you should not try your strength by sitting up, and I'll get a nurse in to

see that my medicines are given regularly, and that you take plenty of nourishment."

But this Muriel strenuously objected to.

"My maid can do all that is necessary," she said; "and, indeed, it would do me far more harm than good to have anyone watching me. Pray spare me the infliction, and I promise to follow your directions to the letter."

Clifford gave way, thinking it better to humour her fancies, and then called in her maid—a rosy, good-natured-looking girl, who was devoted to her mistress, and very readily undertook the task of fulfilling the doctor's orders.

Before his departure, Muriel made a request that rather surprised Clifford.

"I wish you to say nothing to my husband that may tend to alarm him about my health," she said, a red flush creeping up her cheeks. "If he asks you, pray make as light of it as possible."

He gave the required promise all the more readily because, as a matter of fact, he was really unable to pronounce any definite opinion on her case.

That evening, instead of going out, Philip paced restlessly up and down the long gallery in which his rooms were situated, feeling even more depressed than usual. He had counted a good deal on Lady Urwicke's influence with Haldé, but the illness of the former had prevented her performing her promise, and so no light had been thrown on the young girl's mysterious conduct.

One of those moods in which we are inclined to look at everything through a dismal medium had been on Greville all day, and his melancholy was not decreased by the sight of Haldé passing through the hall attired in evening dress and leaning on the arm of Sir Jasper, who was conducting her to to the carriage waiting outside. They were both going out to dinner; and, indeed, it was very seldom they were at home now, for Haldé seemed feverishly anxious to throw herself into all the gaiety possible, and the Baronet, on his part, was only

too delighted that his neighbours should have the chance of seeing and admiring his fair bride-elect.

Philip went to the stained-glass window, and, throwing it open, leaned out and let the cool softness of the evening breeze blow across his throbbing temples, while he looked at the gardens, all bathed in the amber sunset radiance, and beyond them to the park, with its grand old trees, under which the deer were herding together amongst the bracken.

"Is it for this fine house, these rich lands, and Sir Jasper's title she has sold herself?" he muttered, bitterly. "I have heard that women are weak, fickle, changeable as the wind itself, and now I am inclined to believe it. Well, the chances were hardly fair. The Baronet has wealth, position, an honoured name to offer, while I have nothing but love."

Only, he said to himself, he would have given such love as should amply have compensated for the lack of all else.

The sunset colours faded to a pale, faint primrose, that in its turn to grey, and then the dusky shadows of twilight began to close round the silent landscape, and in the purple depths of the heavens stars came out, while from above the tops of the trees rose the moon's young crescent, looking like a pearly boat on an azure sea.

Everything was very still; only the far-off note of a corn-crake from the dewy fields down by the river, or the shrill scream of an owl as it flitted noiselessly by broke the silence; and perhaps it was owing to this cause that a faint rustle, as of drapery being pulled aside, made Philip glance up quickly and look round.

At the end of the gallery near which he stood were green-baize curtains, placed there for no ostensible purpose, for here the passage ended; and Greville felt a slight thrill of superstitious fear run through his veins as he saw that one of these curtains was held back by a human hand, although there were no signs of anyone behind the drapery.

It was only for a moment this weakness lasted, then he dashed forward, pulled the curtains aside, and, as on a former occasion under similar circumstances, found himself confronted by—nothing.

"There must be magic in it. I swear I saw the hand!" he cried, speaking aloud in his excitement, and gazing round to make sure he was alone.

Puzzled and annoyed, he pushed back the baize and made a careful examination of the oak panelling, which was elaborately and fantastically carved like the other parts of the corridor, but he found nothing to confirm his idea of there being an exit; and so at last, more bewildered than ever, he gave up the search, resolving to seek Sybil and tell her what he had seen, in the hope that she might possibly be able to explain it.

Accordingly he proceeded to her sitting-room and tapped lightly at the door, which was closed, and receiving no answer concluded she must be downstairs.

To make sure he gently turned the handle and looked in, and then found himself mistaken, for there, at the table close by the window, he saw Miss Ruthven bending over a basket of roses, into the hearts of which she was carefully dropping the contents of the curious glass phial he had restored to her outside Lady Urwicke's boudoir a few mornings ago. Beside the basket was a large open volume.

She was so absorbed in her employment that she had not heard his knock, but when she saw him she started violently, and there came in her eyes an expression that was strangely like fear.

"I beg your pardon for intruding," said Philip, standing with the door-handle in his hand, and wondering at his agitation—so different to the usual calmness of her demeanour. "Have I startled you?"

"Yes," a little haughtily. "You should have rapped before entering."

"I did; only I suppose you were too busy to hear me. I wanted to tell you of an incident that has just happened in the corridor."

She received his story of the hand incredulously enough—was inclined to ridicule it in fact.

"You have been listening to the silly stories of the gallery being haunted, and they have influenced your fancy," she said. "It is impossible anyone can have been there, for, as you know, a dead wall closes in the passage, and no one could have escaped from behind the curtains without passing you."

"But I saw the hand as distinctly as I see yours at this minute!"

"You thought you did—the darkness deceived you."

"It was not dark—not so dark as it is here now."

"Well, then, you were the victim of an optical delusion. What other explanation can there possibly be, unless you believe in spirits?"

For a minute he felt almost sorry he had come since she was so sceptical, and clearly not inclined to pursue any investigations in the matter.

"I was wondering," he said, hesitatingly, "whether there was a secret door behind the curtains—you know one often hears of such things in old houses like this."

She started, genuinely surprised at the suggestion.

"No, I think not—I am sure not. I have lived here a good many years, and never heard such a possibility mooted before."

"Then I suppose I must be content to accept the occurrence as one of those strange ones destined to remain for ever a mystery," he observed, rising and going towards the door.

On the threshold stood Chevell, Lady Urwicke's maid, with every sign of agitation in her manner.

"Oh, if you please, miss, will you come to my lady! She is in a sort of fit, and looks to me as if she were dying!"

CHAPTER XXII.

LEFT to himself, Philip's wonder and perplexity concerning the event that had just happened was lost in anxiety on Muriel's account.

He had really conceived a great liking, amounting, indeed, to fondness for her, based, no doubt, on the kindness and sympathy she had invariably shown him. Besides, he pitied a fate he instinctively felt to be hopelessly unhappy.

She seemed so lonely—ill in a house where no one cared for her, save Haldé, from whom the knowledge that her indisposition was anything more than temporary had been studiously kept, and who had been prevented by Sybil from going to see her.

Lord Urwicke had that very morning gone to London, summoned thither by Mr. Darley on business connected with his estates, and really unaware that there was any danger to be apprehended from his wife's condition; for Dr. Clifford, in answer to his inquiries, had contented himself with the vague platitudes of "want of energy and general debility."

In point of fact, Claudi had come to the conclusion that the sooner he and Muriel were away from Heathcliff Priory the better for both; and as his own house would not be finished for some time yet, he resolved to hire one at the seaside, where his wife would stand a better chance of recovering her health, while he would escape the entanglement into which Sybil was subtly drawing him.

Perhaps the thought of putting so many miles between Muriel and Greville was not without a very strong influence in helping him to this decision.

Philip, not knowing these undercurrents, looked on his departure as particularly heartless at this juncture, and, almost unknown to himself, constituted himself the champion of the woman who had held out her hand to him in kindness the first day he had entered her father's house, and who had done her best to help him ever since.

He waited in the passage outside her door, until he saw Chevell come to fetch some vinegar for bathing her mistress's brow, and then he stopped her to ask how Lady Urwicke was progressing.

"Well, sir, she's come out of the sort of fit that took her," answered the girl, whose usually red cheeks were now quite pale; "but she seems too weak and ill even to speak; and if I had my way I'd have the doctor here at once. He told me to send for him in case she had one of them attacks, but Miss Ruthven says it isn't worth while. She says my lady will be all right in half an hour, and it isn't my place to contradict her."

From this Philip concluded the attack to have been similar to the one he had witnessed, and this being so he at once decided Dr. Clifford ought to be summoned.

Rightly or wrongly he distrusted Sybil Ruthven, and had done so from the very commencement of their acquaintance, therefore he put no faith in any solicitude she might pretend on Muriel's behalf. He had heard the gossip current concerning her former relations with Lord Urwicke; and from what he himself had witnessed was inclined to believe his marriage had made no difference in her sentiments, whatever it might have done in his; and on the many occasions when he had seen them together he fancied he had detected a bitter and contemptuous loathing in Sybil's manner towards the woman who bore the name and title she had once fancied would be her own.

Taking into consideration all these circumstances, Philip came to the conclusion that he would be justified in assuming the initiative, and sending for Clifford. True, Sybil would be very angry, and perhaps Sir Jasper, too, at his presumption; but, after all, that was a secondary consideration, for he did not value the good opinion of either, and in a few days he would probably say good-bye to them for ever. If by his action he saved Muriel any suffering he need not stay to calculate after consequences.

Thus arguing, he snatched up his hat, and in a few minutes was out in the park, walking along at a good stiff rate towards the village. Fortunately, Clifford was at home, so Philip got up in his dog-cart and rode back with him.

"Perhaps," he said, as they neared the house, and the remembrance of Lord Urwicke's anger at his display of interest in Muriel struck him, "you had better not say anything about my having fetched you, but drop in casually as if it had been your own idea to come. I will get down here, and after you have seen Lady Urwicke I should like to hear your opinion. I'll wait in the library till you come!"

The physician nodded assent, so Philip reached the house on foot about ten minutes after he had gone in. He went straight to the library, which was in semi-obscurity, for the lamps had not been lighted, and the only illumination came from the moonbeams, which were filtering in through the stained-glass windows, and falling in long slants of coloured light on the carpet.

He had not been there very long before the door was gently unclosed, and quietly as a shadow Sybil Ruthven glided in. Without perceiving the motionless figure seated in the gloom of the curtains, she advanced to the steps, ascended them, and replaced a large volume on one of the highest shelves; then she came down, and withdrew as noiselessly as she had come.

"Lady Urwicke is worse—much worse," said Dr. Clifford, entering the now lamp-lit library, and looking grave and disturbed. "Her pulse is feeble, her strength has considerably diminished, and unless a change takes place very soon she will sink from exhaustion. Do you know when Lord Urwicke is likely to return?"

Philip answered in the negative.

"Miss Ruthven professes ignorance of his movements—and I dare not question his wife. If he were here I should tell him I wished to call in a second opinion; and, indeed, I shall do so on my own responsibility to-morrow morning unless the patient shows signs of improvement."

"Do you think, then, there is danger?"

"Not immediately—that is to say, she will not die to-night, or to-morrow, but her life is certainly not worth forty-eight hours' purchase."

Philip received the intelligence in shocked silence—so young, so fair, had the fiat really gone

forth that she must yield her soul into her Maker's hands!

"And I candidly confess that I do not understand her case," continued the doctor, coming and standing where the lamplight fell on his perturbed face. "Paroxysms such as the two she has had don't come without adequate cause, but what that cause is I am unable to say. The hypothesis of poison has suggested itself to me—unlikely, improbable as it is—but her symptoms do not correspond with the action of any poison I know, and it is a branch of my profession I have especially studied, so I am forced to give the idea up as untenable."

Philip started violently, and grew pale.

"What particularly suggested the notion?"

"Those shadows in her face. As you may perhaps be aware, lead poisoning produces a blue line on the gums, but for all that I am quite sure it has nothing to do with her condition. It is not often I find myself in such a dilemma, but now I simply say, I am at a standstill. All I can do is to keep up her strength by administering as much nourishment as possible, and directly I get home I shall send off a nurse whom I can trust, and who will sit up all night with her."

"Then you don't intend staying yourself?"

"I can do no good at present, and I have another patient I am bound to see. When I have left him I shall return, and hear how Lady Urwicke is; but I don't wish to alarm her by remaining in the room. I want to keep from her all idea of her danger if possible, and I have perfect confidence in the woman I shall send, who will not quit her side for an instant."

"Miss Ruthven is not with her now!" exclaimed Philip, in a quick tone of alarm.

"Miss Ruthven—no. She was in the room when I first went, but I sent her out to take some roses away, and I told her not to return, for it struck me her presence made Lady Urwicke nervous, and unable to answer my questions coherently. She was very angry at her dismissal, for she seemed extremely anxious to stay, and, I believe, deeply resented my insisting on carrying my point. You see, women are such perfectly unreasonable creatures that there are only two ways of managing them—either cajolery, or peremptoriness!"

"What did you say about roses?" asked Philip, who at any other time might have laughed at this classification with regard to the fairer sex, but now only looked very disquieted.

"Why, when I entered the Viscountess's room I could hardly breathe, the atmosphere was perfectly stifling with perfume, and I saw on a table close by the side of the bed a great bowl full of roses. Everyone knows how unhealthy flowers are at night, but I certainly had no idea how entirely their scent would permeate the air. I never smelt anything like it in my life before. Of course, I ordered them out immediately."

After this the doctor hurried off in order to send the nurse, while Philip sat still, his head resting on his hand, until at last he sprang up and reached the book Sybil had put back on the shelf. It was, as he supposed, the volume on "India" he had seen her studying once before, and as he turned the leaves they fell back quite naturally on a page towards the middle, as if that part had been consulted oftener than the rest. From page 126 it went to page 129, so one leaf was missing, and this struck the young man, as he was aware the work was a very old and very rare one, and prized by Sir Jasper as being in perfect condition. He felt quite sure those two pages had not been out when he looked at it last.

A terrible suspicion had come to Philip—so terrible that at first he had put it aside as unworthy of himself or further consideration; but, in spite of all his efforts, it would intrude itself, and little by little a theory shaped itself out of his brain, of which every link in the chain of evidence seemed well-nigh perfect. If his reasoning were right, then Fate had indeed thrust on him a fearful responsibility!

"There are two things that will put an end to doubt, and until I obtain them I will reserve my judgment," he said to himself, his face cold and stern. "One is to get possession of that missing

leaf, or at least see its contents—how can I manage it?"

There was only one place where he could be sure of finding a duplicate volume—the British Museum, and here he resolved to seek it. He would take the first train in the morning, and if he made the best of his time he might manage to return early in the afternoon. Having arranged this, he proceeded downstairs and waited in the hall until the arrival of the nurse—a clear, quiet, neatly-dressed woman, with a repressed power latent in her face.

"You are going to sit up with Lady Urwicke to-night?" he said, stopping her.

"Yes, sir."

"And you will allow no one else in the room?"

"The doctor has given me strict orders not to do so, sir."

"That is well; but I have another injunction to add. Will you see that your patient neither eats or drinks anything but what you yourself prepare, and, above all, allow no flowers to be brought in the sick chamber?"

The nurse looked surprised, but at once gave the required promise. She did not know who Philip was, and naturally supposed him to be a relative of Lady Urwicke's.

The young man then slipped in her hand a note, on which he had written a few words to the physician, and satisfied that he had taken all the precautions necessary, went upstairs again.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE habits of the reading-room of the British Museum are, as a rule, too much occupied in their own concerns to trouble themselves much about their neighbours—not but what this rule has its frequent and glaring exceptions, too—and no one seemed to notice the young man who, with the aid of a reference book, found the work he wanted, and then sat down and proceeded to consult it.

Presumably his search was successful, for he took a sheet of paper from his pocket-book, and copied in full a paragraph from pages 127 and 128, after which he read it over carefully to see that it was correct, and then went out, called a hansom, and was driven to—Street, Strand, where he descended, and stood for a few minutes hesitating in front of a window in which different kinds of oriental articles were exhibited.

Presently he went in, and was met by a dark-eyed Jewish-looking woman, dressed in some Eastern texture, and with huge gold bangles in her ears.

"What may it be your pleasure, sir?" she asked, her accent, as well as the idiom of her speech, betraying her foreign nationality.

Philip looked round cautiously before answering, and dropped his voice almost to a whisper as he said,—

"I want an Indian essence for the purpose of perfuming flowers."

The woman looked at him keenly, and, apparently satisfied by the result of her survey, led the way through the shop, which was littered over with gorgeous oriental tissues, gold and silver broddery, Turkish rugs, Dragon china, and all the multitudinous variety of a museum or curiosity shop.

Philip followed her into a smaller chamber, apparently used as a laboratory, for in it were retorts, crucibles, and the various appliances of practical chemistry, while at the further end stood a small, wiry-looking man, who, with a glass mask over his face, and a pair of bellows in his hand, was blowing a heap of powdered coal, mixed with other substances, into a glow. He left off as he saw his visitor, and came forward.

"What can I do for you, sir?" removing his mask, and looking into Philip's face with deep-seated, penetrating eyes.

"Some little time ago," said Philip, returning his gaze with one of equal significance, "a lady came here for the purpose of procuring a drug, which she took away in a small glass phial, engraved with Eastern hieroglyphics. Now I am

anxious to get a small quantity of the same essence, and she told me I should have no difficulty in obtaining it here—you understand me?"

"And the name of the drug?"

"I believe European chemists call it simply *l'eau blanche*."

The man nodded assentingly. His wife had already left the room.

"You remember the lady of whom I speak?" added Philip. "She was tall and dark."

"I remember her perfectly."

"Well enough to recognise her again?"

"Certainly."

"She came here July 28th."

"Right," said the chemist, turning over the leaves of a book. "I keep a list of all my customers' purchases, also the date of their visit, in case of reference being required. I suppose you are aware this essence is expensive?"

"What will be the price of a small phial like the one taken by the lady in question?"

"Twenty guineas."

Philip had not so much money with him, but he took off a diamond ring he was wearing—a gift from Mrs. Maxwell—and laid it on the table.

"I will redeem it in a day or two," he said, and the chemist, after examining it with the critical attention of an expert, put it away as if satisfied as to its value, and then took from a locked cabinet a small sealed phial, precisely like the one Sybil Ruthven had declared contained attar of roses.

Five minutes later Greville was again in the hansom on his way to Euston Station, from whence he found he could get to Heathcliff by an earlier train than from Paddington. So pre-occupied was he, that on leaving the booking office he ran up against two gentlemen, and would have passed on with an apology, had not the younger seized him by the sleeve and detained him.

"The very man, by Jove!" exclaimed Robert Pierson—for it was he. "Why, Greville, where are you off to in such a hurry?"

Looking up to return the barrister's greeting, Philip saw that he was accompanied by a tall, loosely-built brown-skinned man, with white hair and whiskers, clad in a travelling suit of light grey—a man whose broad, horny hands announced him to have been no favoured child of fortune, but one who had earned his bread by the sweat of his brow. He was scanning Philip with earnest attention.

"I was just on the point of telegraphing to you," said Pierson; "but as you are in town I shall be saved the trouble. Will you come to my chambers at once?"

"I cannot, my train starts in ten minutes."

"But you must put off going until to-night."

"Impossible! It is a matter of the most urgent necessity that I should get back to Heathcliff immediately."

The barrister stared. There was a repressed excitement in the younger man's demeanour that he could not understand, and the gravity of his expression seemed to say it owed its origin to no very pleasant source.

"Of course you know your own concerns best," he observed, shrugging his shoulders; "but I certainly thought you would be anxious to meet Mr. Matthew Seaforth, who I now have the pleasure of introducing to you."

Philip looked up eagerly, and held out his hand, which the colonel warmly shook.

"Mr. Seaforth has arrived a little earlier than I expected. I met him at Liverpool, and we have just come up together," said Pierson, leading the way to a more retired part of the station where they were comparatively alone. "On our journey I explained your history to him, and he is inclined to coincide with me in thinking you his nephew."

"More inclined than ever now," said Seaforth, in a voice of some emotion, "for unless my hopes themselves deceive me, you are marvellously like my sister Grace."

"I have been thinking we can easily put the matter to the test," remarked the barrister, who, in spite of his usual stolidism, shared in a degree the excitement of the other two. "Seaforth has in his pocket-book the letter he received from his sister telling him of her son's birth. Do you

think you remember the writing on the outside of your stolen packet sufficiently well to identify it?"

Greville answered in the affirmative, and thereupon Seaforth, with hands that trembled slightly, took out an old yellow-looking epistle with the corners frayed and the ink faded, and handed it to the young man.

"It is the same!" exclaimed Philip, with a deep inspiration, and for a minute neither of the three men spoke.

"Then all doubts are at an end, and your sister's identity with Greville's mother is distinctly proved," said Pierson—who was the first to recover his self-possession—to Matthew Seaforth. "Can you not," turning to Philip, "postpone your journey now and come back with me, so that we may consult together respecting the next steps that ought to be taken?"

Philip shook his head.

"But surely," exclaimed the barrister, a little impatiently; "there is nothing awaiting you at Heathcliff of equal importance!"

"I tell you it is a matter of life and death!" answered the young man, who even now trembled with apprehension as he thought of what might be happening at the Priore. "I would not miss the next train for a thousand pounds; but to-morrow I will be at the Temple without fail."

With this Pierson was forced to content himself, and at that moment the guard blew his whistle, and Greville had only just time to rush forward and take his seat before the train started.

The barrister followed him, and stood at the window of the carriage after closing the door.

"By the bye, how is it you didn't answer my letter?" he asked, suddenly.

"Letter—what letter? I have not heard from you since I last saw you," shouted Philip, contriving to make his voice heard above the roar of the engine and the clash of metals; and Pierson, who was naturally surprised at the reply, found himself at that minute forced to hop out of the way in order to avoid being annihilated by a piled-up waggon of heavy luggage propelled by a philosophic porter, who was seemingly under the impression that his remark, "By leave, sir," fully entitled him to drive his juggernaut over the body of any passenger hapless enough to get in his way.

It was about three o'clock when Philip got back to the Priore, and his first action was to rush upstairs and knock at Muriel's dressing-room, his summons being answered by the nurse, who said Lady Urwicke remained in the same condition, too weak even to utter a word. She had, however, been free from pain so far.

"Dr. Clifford has been here nearly all the morning, and has only just left," she added. "He telegraphed to Lord Urwicke's club, and also to Sir James C—, the great London physician, who is coming down to-night."

"Then no one has seen the Viscountess?"

"No, not even Miss Darrell, who stayed outside the door for more than an hour, weeping so bitterly that it was as much as I could do to refuse to let her in. However, the doctor's orders were strict, and, as I told her, I dare not disobey them. Miss Ruthven came too—has been to the door several times to inquire."

"And there are no flowers in the room?"

"Not one. Miss Ruthven had a rose in her waistband when she came. I noticed it because of what you said last night."

Philip turned away satisfied—at least no more mischief had been done.

Still he could not be too expeditious in guarding against danger, and so without even staying to change his coat or take the marks of dust and travel from his appearance, he sought Sybil, who he found in her own room—a room rich in rose-coloured silken draperies, mirrors, gilding, and ornaments; for Sybil's sensuous, pleasure-loving nature revelled in luxury, and, to do him justice, her brother made no effort to stint her expenditure.

She herself was sitting close to the flower-filled window attired in a tea-gown, and having an appearance of laxy languor, as if life held nothing of more importance than the duty of drinking afternoon tea out of quaint cups of Sevres china.

"Come and sit down, Mr. Greville, and I will give you some tea," she said, waving him towards a chair. "Do you take sugar?" pausing with the silver tongs poised in her hand. "You won't have any? Very well. I make a rule of never pressing anyone."

She sank down among her cushions again, and Philip watched her as she leaned back, graceful, negligent, beautiful, her full red lips curved in a half smile, her heavy white lids drooping over the lustrous eyes till the long lashes swept her cheek. Had he wronged her in his thoughts? Could she indeed be capable of what he believed, or was the theory he had built up only a hideous fancy, a monstrous delusion?

No, the proofs were too strong. This woman, with her soft, southern grace and subtle beauty, was only a lovely human panther, who would give no quarter, show no mercy to the victim hapless enough to fall in her clutches!

"You are quiet, Mr. Greville. Is it only for the purpose of looking at me you have honoured me with your presence?" she asked at length, with a playfulness that masked the impatience she dared not show.

"No, unfortunately I have come to speak on a subject of the utmost gravity—Lady Urwicke, in fact."

He was keenly observant of the swift change that passed over her face.

"What a sepulchral voice!" she exclaimed, with a little shiver. "One would think from your tone that I had something to answer for regarding her."

He rose up in his excitement and stood before her, pale, stern, and accusing.

"You have all to answer for—for if she dies, as is only too probable, you will have been her murderer!"

(To be continued.)

THIS STORY COMMENCED IN NO. 1883. BACK NUMBERS CAN STILL BE HAD.

THE LETTER IN MR. SMITH'S POCKET.

—187—

"It fits you perfect, sir," said the young man in the tailor's shop. "It fits like paper on a wall," he was going to remark, but feeling this rather hackneyed, he added, "It fits like the skin on a sausage."

"A little loose, isn't it?" said the customer, trying to get a fair view of his own back in the glass—a feat which many people endeavour to perform every day of the year, and in which no one ever succeeds. "It seems to wrinkle."

"Why, that is because you turn and twist so," said the shopman. "Besides, you don't want it to fit too well, only just easy. Why, now, if you could see the elegant look of your back from where I stand," added the shopman, rapturously, "you'd buy it this minute for fear some other gentleman should get it first." And the speaker folded his arms on the pile of ready-made overcoats, all exactly alike, even to the last button, and felt that he could never do better than that while he lived.

And as his customer could not get behind himself, and was apt to believe what people said, he bought the coat.

Having put it on—it was cold, and he decided to wear it home—John Smith received his receipt and walked away with a little flattered consciousness of his elegant back, that would have been very speedily dispelled could he have seen himself as others saw him, for the coat was much too big for him.

Meanwhile, another young man entered the clothing store, driven by the falling thermometer to purchase an overcoat.

"Exactly your size," said the talented shopman, as he took number two from the shelf and proceeded to force his customer into it.

"I don't quite think it is," said the victim, as he moved his arms uneasily. "It feels too tight."

"A new coat always does, don't you know,"

said the shopman, "if it's the fit it ought to be. A gentleman of your figure don't want to go about in a bag. Why, if you could stand where I stand and see how stylish your back looks, sir, you'd not let me take it off for fear someone else should snap it up, not knowing he couldn't look like that in it."

The customer fell into the trap as the other had fallen.

His vanity was tickled, and he revealed the fact in his countenance. He paid for the coat, and offered the shopman a cigar, and the latter gentleman remained dreaming of promotion; for now that he had tried a new method on two customers, and succeeded in making a sale each time, what might he not effect in the future?

Later on, the twin coats separated in the shop, met again on the backs of their purchasers.

"Mr. Smith," said a gentleman walking with a friend down a busy street, "let me introduce you to Mr. John Smith."

Coat number one bowed.

"I'm John Smith myself," said coat number two. "When Adam had grown tired of naming his descendants, he said, 'Let all the rest be called John Smith.'"

Then all three gentlemen laughed at the joke, and had a drink together on the strength of it. After that, as John Smith number two was a stranger in the city, John Smith number one took him to the theatre, and afterwards to have oysters at a supper-room.

Meanwhile they talked business, and got on famously, and parted believing each other to be the very best fellows in the world.

Smith number one, being a householder, went directly home. His wife was sitting up for him, and came to the door in curl papers, with a kitchen candle in her hand, and a pink nose and eyelids indicative of weeping.

"I have been frightened to death, John," she declared. "I heard howls down the street, and thought a policeman must have you in charge."

"What for, my dear?" asked her spouse, bestowing a connubial kiss.

"Oh, because they love to do it," said Mrs. Smith, "if ever they catch anyone out very late. If you were driven to read the papers as you sat up alone, as often as I am, you'd know what was going on too."

Mr. John Smith had married a silly little woman because, as he said, he liked that sort, and he only chuckled her under the chin, and said,—

"Well, I'm home now, Tootsle. Let's shut up the house and go to bed. How does my new overcoat look?"

Mrs. Smith examined it critically.

"Well, it's a little loose, I think," said she.

"Well, I don't know. You don't want to look as if you were melted and poured into a coat, you know, Susie," said Mr. Smith number one.

"And here is a button coming off," said Mrs. Smith. "I'll sew it on before I go to bed, or you'll be going out without it, and everybody saying how I neglect you."

She seized the coat, and being now in the bedroom, she sat near the lamp, and began to look in her basket for needle and thread.

Meanwhile her lord and master, who had grown heavy under the influence of the theatre and oysters, undressed himself, and turned into bed, where he was soon snoring tremendously.

The button on, his wife turned the coat about, finding much fault with it, and turned out the pockets to see if they were strong.

"I never would buy ready-made things," she said to herself. "I can see why John does it."

She put her hand into the breast-pocket as she spoke, and felt an envelope.

"I wonder whether it is the letter I gave him to post this morning!" she said. "Just as likely as not he forgot it."

But it was not her letter. It was one addressed in a feminine hand to Mr. John Smith, and bearing the post-mark "Brighton."

"That is where he spent three weeks some time ago," said Susie. "He never mentioned corresponding with anyone. To be sure it may be a business matter. Some of those dreadful masculine women are in business just like men. Anyhow, I'll peep."

She looked over her shoulder, saw, as well as heard, that her John still slumbered, opened the sheet of notepaper, and read these words:—

"MY DARLING JACK,—

"How long you have been gone! I fairly pine for you. Your dear letters are all my joy. What an awful thing it is to be fond of a commercial traveller! I just wish I had chosen somebody that could settle down.

"If you really will bring me a present, and will have me say what it shall be—well, let it be a parasol, one of those in black lace over red satin; they are so stylish.

"Have you got your new coat yet? I am always so afraid you will catch cold.

"Your own, "NELLIE."

The letter bore date:

"No. 101, Dane-street, Brighton,
"Sept. 21, '86,

It was only three days old.

Susie did not scream, nor did she faint. She doubled up her small fists and muttered "Revenge!" between her teeth.

"I'll kill her," she said, "and then I'll kill him, and then I'll kill myself." But first, I'll have it out with her."

In the morning, John Smith number one, who was in a great hurry, never noticed the peculiar sternness of his wife's demeanour.

"Good-bye, darling," he said, as he fumbled in his pockets. "Hang it all!"

"Have you lost anything?" asked his wife. "Oh, hang it! Yes; some papers," replied Mr. Smith.

"Important ones!" queried Susie.

"Letters!" said her husband. "I can remember their contents, but not a certain address. Now, I wonder where I dropped them."

"Where were they from?" asked Susie.

"Oh, one was from Brighton," said John Smith, not guessing the trap sprung for him.

"Ah!" said Susie, bitterly.

He fancied his late home-coming on the previous night had made her cross.

"I'll come early to-night," he said, "and bring you a present."

His wife accepted his kiss, and thought of Judas, and then the door shut behind him.

No sooner had he gone, than his wife rushed to her room, consulted the railway guide, dressed herself, and, with the letter in her pocket, hurried to the station, and took a return ticket to Brighton.

She had resolved to meet the fair and frail inhabitant of 101, Dane-street, and get back before her husband came home at night. She had plenty of time, and had been in Brighton frequently.

It was a small street with gardens before the houses, and 101 was on the end of the row. A dressmaker's card was in the window, and an old lady was just setting some potted flowers out to air, and when Susie inquired from behind her black dotted veil:

"Is there a person here whose first name is Nellie?" The old lady answered by calling out:

"Here, Nellie; somebody wants you," and a young woman, throwing down her work, obeyed the summons.

"Walk in," she said; and Mrs. John Smith entered a neat room. "You've come about a dress, I suppose?"

"No," replied Susie, who was not a woman of resources; "No; I've come about a man."

On this Mrs. Smith put her hand into her pocket, and drew forth the letter she had found in her husband's new overcoat the night before.

"Did you write that?" she asked.

The young girl looked at it, turned it over, turned it upside down, and then back again, and finally read it.

"Yes," she said, when she had finished it, "I wrote it, and I've got my answer."

"Who answered it?" asked Susie.

"The gentleman I wrote to—Mr. John Smith," replied Nellie.

"Oh, you wretch!" cried Susie.

"How dare you," gasped Nellie, "call me a wretch!"

"How dare you write to him?" asked Susie.

"How dare I write to the man I am engaged to be married to!" shrieked Nellie. "Who are you? His mother? I believe you are his mother; they always make a fuss if a man chooses for himself."

"His mother!" cried Susie. "If you want to know who I am, I am his wife."

Nellie caught her breath and sat down upon a horsehair sofa, and looked at her visitor.

"Didn't you know he was married?" asked Susie.

"My John Smith married? Why he isn't. He never so much as kissed any lady before. He swore it," said Nellie.

"His name is John Smith, he is a commercial traveller, and he hasn't known you long," said Susie.

"I met him at a party a few months ago. It was love at first sight," said Nellie sobbing.

"He said so, anyhow."

"I found your letter in my husband's pocket," said Susie. "He was looking for it high and low this morning. You, I begin to believe, he has deceived you. He told you he was single."

"Yes, and we are to be married in two weeks, and my dress fits beautifully," moaned Nellie.

"Oh, what will he say! But, after all, you may be telling lies, for all I know. Why should I believe you?"

"I don't ask you to do so without proof," said Susie. "We will face him together."

"I'll be ready in a minute," said Nellie, and not a tear will I shed. Be ready in one moment. What a wretch!"

"Ah, what a wretch!" echoed Susie, from her seat near the window.

Nellie came downstairs in a few minutes, with her hat on, and the two were about to leave the house together, when a noise of steps was heard in the gravel path without, and Nellie, peeping through the curtained window, called out:

"Why, there he is! He has come from town. He has got a parasol for me. Hide, hide somewhere, and let me talk to him first."

As she spoke she dragged poor Susie out of sight and crammed her into a corner behind a walnut bookcase. Now that it had come it was too dreadful to bear, Susie said to herself. The next instant someone uttered these words:

"What is the matter, Nellie! Why won't you kiss me! Why, Nellie, you wrote me such a lovely letter and I've brought the parasol."

There was a sound as of pursuing and flying steps, then:

"Don't touch me!" squealed Nellie, I've found you out. Your wife has been here."

"My wife!" roared the masculine voice.

"Yes," said Nellie. "Here she is."

And diving behind the bookcase, she dragged the wretched Susie, now shivering with shame and terror, in the middle of the room.

"This is what your long days in London meant, eh! screamed Nellie. "If she hadn't found my letter in your pocket I'd have been married to you in two weeks. There, take your wife and go home, and kill her if you want to, for I just hate you both. Oh, you horrid old Mormon!"

"Oh! oh! oh! wailed Susie. Oh! oh! don't, please don't!"

Meanwhile the accused faced the lady with a look of scorn.

"My wife!" said he. "Why, you ugly little demon, do you dare to say I'm your husband? You—"

"No, I'm not! No, your not! No, I didn't! Oh! oh! oh!" moaned Susie.

"I never saw her before," cried the gentleman, who was no other than Mr. John Smith number two. "She's an impostor! I'll have her arrested!"

"And I never saw him before," moaned the wife of Mr. John Smith no one. "But the letter was in my John's pocket, and I thought—of course I thought—it was written to him. It has his name on it—"

"I see," remarked Nellie's adorer, ecstatically. "I understand. Your husband and I have the same name. If he travels for Bixby Brothers, I dined with him last night. We went to the

play, took supper and changed coats. I found a lot of letters not belonging to me, in my pocket this morning. Here they are. You see our coats are both alike. Ready-made coats—just bought that day. We spoke about them. Bought at the same place—"

"Oh, don't say any more," sobbed Mrs. John Smith number one. "Don't, please; I've been such a fool!"

"So have I," said Nellie.

"Well," said Smith number two, "we began it by changing coats."

"Dear John," said Nellie, "can you forgive me?"

"Ask him not to tell my John," said Susie; "he'd never forgive me. And if that coat is just the same as John's, you'll have to sew on the bottom left-hand button before he loses it off;" with which words the ladies kissed and parted.

Mrs. Smith got back in good time, unexpected; but I am afraid John Smith number two told the whole story to John Smith number one, the day he brought Susie to Nellie's wedding.

[THE END.]

OPALS AND DIAMONDS.

—10—

CHAPTER X.

"YES."

"I AM sorry that I have to go to town to-day," said Sir Lionel, when Monday came round. "I was going to ride over and ask the Rector to let you stay a little longer. But this wretched business must be attended to."

"Of course," assented Maggie, looking away over the park and woodlands. "Business before pleasure."

"Yes, but I should like pleasure before business."

"I suppose most of us would," she answered, still not looking at him.

"Would you have stayed?" he next queried.

"I—I—hardly know. I don't think so. We ought to go home to-day. Kate is all alone, and we have trespassed long enough on your mother's kindness and hospitality."

"Oh! no indeed," he rejoined, eagerly. "You know she is more than pleased to have you here. I wish you would stay till my return. I come back on Thursday."

"Thanks," she answered, blushing deeply; "but we really must go home to-day, another time—we will stay longer."

"I hope so. Well, if you won't stay here, I must come to you on Thursday. You know I expect to hear something pleasant on that day!"

"Yes," she murmured, not daring to raise her eyes to his face, and feeling the carnation red grow deeper on her cheek and brow.

"Good-bye, now," he went on, taking her hand in his. "I see the dog cart is waiting. I must go, or I shall miss my train."

"Am I to go without even one kiss?" he demanded, after a minute.

And then, as she remained silent, he stooped and pressed his lips to hers, turning and leaving her immediately after.

"We shall miss all these luxuries," remarked Maud, somewhat discontentedly, later on in day, as she nestled amid the cushions of the Molyneux landau on her homeward way.

"I suppose we shall," agreed her sister absently.

"It is very nice to be rich, and have everything one wishes."

"Yes. Still the wise people say great riches bring great cares."

"They may do so, still I would run the risk if I got the chance."

"You have the chance, and why you don't take it I can't imagine."

"Who said I wasn't going to take it?"

"Nobody. I drew my conclusions from the way in which you treat Clifford Clinton."

"He doesn't seem to mind—much."

"What can he do? The poor fellow is too much in love to be able to help himself."

"Yes, I suppose so, and I think, though men are dubbed 'lords of the creation' and the 'sterner sex,' that they are generally like a piece of silk in the hands of the woman they love. If she is clever enough to manage them properly."

"I quite agree with you. At the same time, though, I think you will 'manage' Captain Clinton off the scene altogether, frighten him away, if you don't take care. He won't always be content to give all, and receive nothing."

"What a Solomon you have become about *affaires de cœur*, lately," said Maud, with one of her sarcastic little laughs. "You need not fear, my dear. I shall only play my adorer just enough to make him thoroughly appreciate and value me when I do condescend to say yes."

"I am glad to hear it," declared Maggie, stoutly. "He is too good to be treated badly."

"I don't intend to treat him badly, at least—not badly, as you mean. I don't appreciate my present surroundings enough to do that," she added, dryly, as the carriage drew up before the Parsonage, and they alighted.

"How have you felt, Kate?" she demanded, dropping into one of the rickety Chippendale chairs in the dining-room, "since we last met?"

"Very well, dear, thank you, as I always do."

"I am certain that I shall feel very ill shortly."

"Why?"

"Why? Because I feel like Cinderella, and I know she was greatly indispensed after leaving the prince's palace, and going back to her dirty chimney-corner to rake ashes."

"Was she?" asked Kate, slightly bewildered at the simile.

"She was," responded Maud, gravely; "though the story-books may not record it. Still what woman can be clothed in purple and fine linen, and sup off dainties served on gold plate overnight, and return to rags and dirt in the morning without experiencing some unpleasant sensations?"

"All women don't experience unpleasant sensations under those circumstances, and I think it is always well to try and make the best of our surroundings," rejoined Miss Randal, seriously.

"But there isn't any 'best' to our surroundings," objected her sister, as her eyes travelled round the shabby room, with its square of threadbare carpet, smoke-blackened walls and ceiling, and dilapidated, old-fashioned furniture. "They are hopelessly bad."

"They might be worse."

"Of course. We might live in a pig-stye, and feed upon nothing but fat pork. I don't know that it would be very much worse," and she cast another disparaging glance at the coarse cloth that covered the table spread for their homely tea, at the thick cups, and huge home-made loaf.

"You wouldn't like the pig-stye, I am inclined to think, and it would be better for you not to go to the Hall, if it unsettles you so much, and makes you so discontented with your own home."

"Well, Kate, there is some excuse," she urged, apologetically. "Everything is done in such style there. A table bright with costly glass, and gold plate, and hot-house blooms, glistening with every dainty and delicacy of the season, and three footmen and a butler to wait on you; bedrooms that are like boudoirs, all satin and lace; drawing-rooms like fairy-land, with something to please the eye wherever it falls; carriages and horses; park-like grounds, everything, in fact, that mortal can desire, and here—nothing. Nothing but poverty and want, and wretchedness. The contrast is awful to me, and makes me feel envious and covetous."

"Two extremely bad things to encourage. You should check them at once, as it may be your fate to be poor all your life. I hope, Maggie, that you have not come back in the same frame of mind as Maud."

"No, I think not," answered the young girl, slowly. "Though I like pretty things I am not

envious, and I love the garden here, it is so wild and beautiful. I am always glad to get back to it."

And so she was, but, still, deep down in her heart was an ardent love for pretty nick-nacks, dainty dresses, charming surroundings, that rendered her home an uncongenial place of abode, and made her long secretly for all the comforts and luxuries money alone can procure.

She was not like Maud—a grumbler given to air her grievances and longings—and neither of her sisters guessed how much she felt the change from the Hall to the Parsonage, how dingy the old house seemed to her, how coarse the food, and how long and dull the hours of the two days that followed her return home.

"Come out in the garden," suggested Maud, on the afternoon of the second day. "It is simply stifling in the house."

"Yes, it will be pleasant there," agreed Maggie, and together the two girls went out, accompanied by Jacko, the little lion-dog, and sat under the shade of a spreading chestnut, and Maud read Swinburne out loud, and Maggie stared straight before her, never hearing a word, thinking of Lionel Molyneux—and of the answer she had to give him on the morrow, the thought of which had driven the wild-rose bloom from her rounded cheeks during the last few days, leaving them white as snow, and giving a strained look to the violet eyes.

CHAPTER XI.

WHAT would she do, she wondered, vaguely. Say "Yes," and become his happy wife, passing all the rest of her life at his side, gaining a crown of earthly joy at the sacrifice of another's peace—another's welfare? Or would she have the strength to say him nay, to do as honour dictated, to drive him from her for ever and aye, and make her future barren and bare, her life, which would probably reach, to three-score years, a bitterness and a burden—a burden that would increase with increasing years, grow bitterer and more unlovely, day by day, in its lonely solitude, for she knew that if she did not marry Sir Lionel she could never be any other man's wife—never would wed O'Hara.

"The burden of long living. Thou shalt fear
Waking, and sleeping mourn upon thy bed,
And say at night, 'Would God the day were here,'
And say at dawn, 'Would God the day were dead.'
With weary days thou shalt be clothed and fed,
And wear remorse of heart for thine attire,
Pain for thy girdle, and sorrow upon thy head—
This is the end of every man's desire."

Maud's voice broke in on her musings, reading out the lines clearly and steadily, and she shivered as she listened. They seemed to foreshadow her own doom, to show her what her future would be, wishing night day and day night in her eagerness to be rid of the burden of living, and nearer the rest and quiet of the silent grave.

"Glorious lines," observed Maud, breaking off for a moment.

"Yes, but very painful, I think."

"Do you, why?"

"I—I hardly know."

"I don't suppose you do, you are too young yet to know much about the 'burden of long living.'"

"True. Still I shall be old some day. We are a long-lived race."

"We are, but not a very melancholy or miserable one. Aunt Pattison, I consider, is a particularly cheerful old lady, despite her seventy years. She doesn't wear 'remorse of heart' or 'pain for her girdle.' Do you think she looked as though she did when you were staying with her last year?"

"No, she was invariably brisk and cheerful, interested in all mundane matters, and—"

"Even down to selling her old clothes to the highest bidder, and dining out once a week at her friend's expense, to keep down the butcher's bill."

"Maud!"

"It is a fact, my dear; at least, it was when I stayed with her. I used to be immensely amused

at her endeavours at thrift and economy, especially as she has an ample income. If you think when you are the wrong side of fifty that there is any chance of your being afflicted with remorse, or of being attacked with 'moonstruck madness,' moping melancholy, I should advise you to do as our respected relative does, look sharply about the candle-ends and empty bottles. You will be so fully occupied that you won't have time to think of the burden of living or any of those dreadful things Swinburne talks about. And now we had better take a stroll, and then go in to tea. I won't read any more to you, for you look quite pale and frightened, and I won't do for you to wear a ghastly aspect to-morrow. I shall send you off to bed early this evening to see if a long spell of beauty-sleep won't bring the roses back to your cheeks."

The next day, however, in spite of her sister's care, Maggie was very white and heavy-eyed, and restless to a degree.

She wandered about the house in an aimless fashion, or in the shady alleys of the old garden—a slim, white-robed figure, with a lovely, anxious face.

The morning waned, the afternoon went on apace.

"He is not coming," she murmured to herself, with a feeling almost akin to relief, at the prospect of another respite.

"Something must have detained Sir Lionel," remarked Maud, in a low tone, after their frugal tea was finished.

"I suppose so," assented her sister; and not caring to discuss the subject Maggie wandered out to the garden again, and sat on a low seat in the little vine-clad arbour at the far end, her eyes bent on the ground, her hands loosely clasped in her lap, indulging in day-dreams engendered by her restless thoughts, and the languor of the sultry summer day.

The sun was shining brightly, bees were sailing over the mignonette and the perfumed roses, the air was laden with the scent of the blossoming pea and climbing woodbine; in the dewy meadows the harsh, monotonous call of the corn-crake was heard, and the lowing of the kine, and the bleating of sheep, intermingled with the short, sharp barks of a dog, yet none of the sounds or sights attracted the young girl's notice.

Her dreams were too sweet, too absorbing, and she did not move till a dark shadow fell athwart the entrance of the sunny arbour, and looking up with a start she found herself face to face with the man of whom she had been dreaming.

For a while neither spoke, but stood looking at each other, gazing into each other's eyes in spell-bound silence.

At last he made a step forward, holding out his hands.

"Maggie," he said, gently, "Maggie, I have come for my answer. Will you tell me now, if I am to be the happiest man on earth or the most wretched?"

At his appeal she tried to speak—tried to break the spell that held her dumb; but something swelled in her throat, and choked back the words that rose to her quivering lips, while tears were dangerously near falling from the star-like eyes.

"Have I startled you, love, by my sudden appearance?" he went on, gently, noting her evident distress. "I saw you sitting here as I passed along the road, and could not resist coming straight to you unannounced. I longed to be with you again. These last three days have been such dreary ones to me, unblessed by your sweet presence. I have realised what my life would be now without you; a mere wilderness—a desert. I have dreamt that I might make my paradise on earth; it can only be made by you. Which is the future to be, Maggie, for me, a wilderness or a paradise? What answer am I to have, 'Yes' or 'No'?"

"Yes," she murmured faintly, her scruples swept away, her resolution to keep her word broken down by the pleading of the man she loved.

As he heard the faintly-breathed monosyllable he snatched her in his arms, and held her pressed against his breast, as though he never meant to

loose her, kissing her pale cheeks till they glowed again.

"My dearest, you make me so happy," he whispered at last, gazing down fondly at the exquisite face pillowed on his breast. "My life has been purposeless hitherto. I have missed and felt the need of the sympathy and tenderness a wife alone can give, the want of the delicate tracery a loving woman's hand alone can complete to make existence perfect. From the first day I saw you my paramount wish was to have you always at my side, to make you mine, to win your love, to crown all the other good gifts fortune has bestowed on me; and I have succeeded. I feel I have won more than I deserve."

"Oh! no, not that," said Maggie, shyly, lifting a pair of radiant violet eyes to his; "not more than you deserve. I feel that I am not worthy of your great love."

"More than worthy, sweetheart," he rejoined, pressing the nestling head against him with his gentle hand. "You are the dearest woman in the world to me."

"I am so glad," she answered, with a sigh of supreme content. "You might have chosen some beautiful, titled woman to be your wife, and to love."

"Who could be more beautiful to me, little witch!" he asked, fondly.

"I—I don't know. Only I am so insignificant—such a nobody for you to choose."

"Well, you will be a 'nobody' no longer."

"I know," she said, with loving humility. "You raise me from obscurity. You honour me with your love, and Heaven grant I may ever deserve it, that I may prove worthy of it in the years to come."

"You will, Maggie, I know." He laid his cheek passionately on the nestling, golden head, and then lifting her face to his gaze, looked down into the violet eyes, as though trying to read her inmost soul. "You love me—love me better than aught else in the whole wide world!"

"Yes," she answered, firmly, "better than aught else in the whole wide world, better than life itself, for life without you would be worthless."

"My darling!" and again he clasped her close to him, "you will let it be very soon!" he said after a while.

"What!" she asked, a little bewildered.

"Our marriage. I want my happiness. I want to have you all to myself. I am selfish, I suppose, but I shall not feel quite at rest till you are bound to me by the strongest tie that can unite man and woman."

"If you wish," she faltered.

"I do wish it, dearest."

"And—your mother! Will she consent? Will she receive me as her daughter?"

"Most assuredly she will," he responded, promptly. "It is the dearest wish of her heart to see you my wife."

"I am so glad. I should dread her coldness."

"You have nothing to fear in that way. You must have noticed how partial she is to you."

"She has always been most kind," acknowledged Maggie.

"And the rector, what will he say?" queried her lover, regarding her with smiling eyes.

"I—I hardly know," she answered, with paling cheeks, for it occurred to her that her father might think it odd a second suitor coming to beg for his permission to marry her, as the first was not yet disposed of.

"Do you think he will not give his consent?" asked the Baronet, anxiously.

"I don't think he will do that, Sir Lionel, but—"

"Lionel, please," he interrupted.

"Lionel, then," she repeated, obediently, "but do not please come to see him about it for a day or two, until Maud has spoken to him on the subject. She is so clever. She can generally manage to make him do whatever she please."

"She will be on our side, then?"

"Yes."

"I hope she will do her best for me."

"I am sure she will."

"Do you think your father will be very obstinate?"

"I think not. Maud will smooth matters over and make it all right with him. I have great faith in her powers."

Which was the truth. Maggie knew the only person who could explain matters to the rector in a satisfactory manner was her clever and unscrupulous sister, who could twist him round her little finger like a bit of silk.

"I am glad to hear it, as there will be a difficulty with Mr. Randal."

"Where is Miss Maud?" he added, quickly.

"I should like to see her."

"Why, here she comes," ejaculated Maggie, as the young lady in question appeared at the top of the path leading to the arbour, hesitated a moment, and then seeing the lovers beckon her came towards them.

"How do you do, Sir Lionel!" she said composedly, though somewhat taken by surprise. "I had no idea that you had returned."

"I only came back this afternoon," he explained, "and came straight from Inghfield station here. I wanted to see your sister; so, spying her in the arbour, I came over the stile, instead of going round by the road, and announced myself."

"Oh, I see."

"You know what I came for, I suppose?" he went on. "You must congratulate me. Maggie has promised to be my wife."

"I congratulate you most sincerely," she responded, a quick flash of triumph lighting up her face.

"I hope you approve of me, and will receive me as a brother-in-law!" he said, jestingly.

"I do indeed," she answered, cordially, giving him her hand with a little graceful gesture. "There is no one I would sooner welcome in that position than yourself."

"Thanks. That is encouraging. Do you think the other members of your family will be as kind?"

"My sisters, I know, will welcome you."

"And your father? Maggie tells me there may be a slight difficulty in obtaining his consent."

"There may be," assented Maud, with one swift glance at her sister's down-dropped blonde head, knowing full well what the difficulty would be; but saying, suavely, "You see, Maggie is the youngest, and resembles so strongly our dear mother, that, naturally, he will be loth to part with her."

"Naturally. If I were he I should never give such a treasure into another man's keeping," pressing his love's little fingers as he spoke.

"He will know that she will be safe in your hands," and the look in Maud's blue eyes was a greater compliment than her words.

"Thanks; it is very good of you to say so, and I hope you will kindly use your influence with your father, and try to get him to consent to our marriage."

"I will do my best."

"And when may I see him, do you think?"

"Give me two days to break the news to him."

"Sunday, then?"

"Yes. He will be busy on that day, his mind full of his sermons, and most likely he will say yes at once in order to be left alone."

"That is a capital idea; I shall certainly act on it."

"Do, and I hope success will attend your efforts."

"Thanks; I hope it will—I shall be a very miserable man if it doesn't. And now good-bye. I shall come over to-morrow if I may, Maggie, to see you."

"Yes, come if you wish it," she assented, looking at him tenderly.

"I will, then," and stooping he kissed her cheek, over which the carnation red stole at the touch of his moustached lips; and, shaking hands with Maud, he went slowly away, with many a lingering backward glance at the form he loved.

CHAPTER XII.

THE AMBASSADRESS.

"So it is an accomplished fact at last," said Maud, when he was out of sight.

"Yes."

"You are to be Lady Molyneux."

"Yes."

"I congratulate you. You are a lucky girl to be the affianced bride of a man of his wealth and position. You will have everything you want, and a magnificent house, and, above all, the opals and diamonds. I envy you those most."

Opals and diamonds gleaming bright,
With your changing rainbow light,
Well have ye done your part,
Ye have won this lady's heart."

"No—no!" cried Maggie, quickly, a troubled look of pain in her soft eyes. "Don't say that; don't think I am marrying him for his wealth or any of his grand possessions. I would marry him if he were a beggar, without a penny in the world."

"Would you?" said her sister, doubtfully. "I wouldn't; I have too great an admiration for the fleshpots of Egypt to marry any man unless he had a goodly income to offer."

"I wish he were poor," went on the other, "that I might show my disinterestedness. It is only my great, my overpowering love for him that has made me consent to be his wife. I cannot live without him—I worship him," she added, passionately.

And she did. Brnyère says, "One loves well but once during life, and that is the first time." But this is to be doubted—the second love, or the love of maturer years, is more intense, more passionate, more lasting.

The first affection of very young people is often but a slight and evanescent feeling, giving place later on to one wholly absorbing; and it was so with Maggie. She had been flattered and pleased by Terence O'Hara's attention, and fascinated by his pleasant Irish manners, but the feeling she had entertained for him had been weak and fleeting. With Lionel Molyneux it was very different; her heart had gone out to him utterly and entirely, and was never likely to return to her keeping.

She was ready to sacrifice anything to become his wife. Maud, however, totally incapable of making any sacrifice herself, couldn't understand anyone else doing so, and remarked, coolly,—

"You only wish that, my child, because you know that he is not and never will be poor."

"I do not, on my honour. I would rather be his wife, and live in a humble cottage, giving up all luxuries and comforts, than marry any other man, even were he a duke."

"Indeed! You would try 'love in a cottage'!"

"I would most gladly," she answered, fervently; "and I only wish that our positions could be reversed, that I might prove to you and all others who doubt the sincerity of my affection how truly and honestly I love him."

"Wish that he was a beggar, and you a sort of Queen Cophtena, in fact?"

"Yes."

"Well, I am extremely glad that you will not have a chance of exhibiting to the world in general, and myself in particular, the depth, height, and breadth of this wonderful affection. What on earth would be the good of it? He is quite content with the present arrangement of affairs. I can't understand people wanting to indulge in quixoties, and tilt at metaphorical windmills, and go out of their way to make themselves unhappy."

"You can never have been in love, then, Maud."

"No, I suppose not, and I shall try to avoid the tender passion if its effect is so unpleasant as it is on you."

"I don't find it unpleasant."

"What, when it makes you say you could not live without him?"

"Even with that."

"I should be very sorry to care for a person so much that life would be valueless to me without them. You see," went on the elder sister, seriously, "so many things may part lovers, or

even husband and wife. First and foremost there is death, whose call we must all obey, sooner or later; then there is jealousy, incompatibility of temper, untruthfulness, enforced separation, and a thousand and one little things over which we have no control. A man may cease to care for his wife, after a few years of married life, if he finds that she is not what his fond fancy painted her; that she does not care for him as much as he believed, or if he discovers anything in her past life of which he disapproves, or—

"That is what I dread," broke in Maggie, lifting a white, haggard face to her companion's gaze.

"What!"

"That Sir Lionel will discover that I have deceived him, that I was engaged all the time he thought me free, that I had no shadow of a right to listen to his tender words, that I was the plighted wife of another man when I said yes to him. I dread losing his love if he hears of my promise to Terence. I have been acting like a child these past weeks, and he hates and despises untruthfulness. He told me once he thought nothing justified a lie, and that we should neither act nor speak them. I haven't gone on, Maud, like this. I will tell him to-morrow the whole truth, and if, after that, he will still take me for his wife, I will write to Terence, begging him to release me, saying that I can never marry him now. I am sure he will do so."

"And I am sure he will not," rejoined the other quickly. "It will be the greatest piece of folly you ever perpetrated if you do that. Say nothing to Sir Lionel, he will never hear of it. Can't you trust to my discretion? Have I not promised to settle matters with Terence? I will manage him so that he shall not molest you, or interfere with you in any way. Is not that enough?"

"Yes, you—it is very kind of you," faltered the poor butterfly, striving to gain her own way, and do what her conscience told her was the only clear and honourable course to pursue, but feeling helpless in the hands of the clever woman who had ruled her almost from the hour of her birth, and in whose hands she was plastic as wax.

"What you suggest would be the worst thing in the world. Terence would come straight from the wilds of Yorkshire, refuse to give you up, probably attack Sir Lionel furiously; you know, or rather you don't know, for you never took the trouble to study his temperament, of what a fiery disposition he is, and it would result in a deadly quarrel between the two men, with perhaps a fatal ending. I suppose you wouldn't like to see him killed," suggested Maud with cold calmness, determined that Maggie should do as she liked, resolved not to forego one iota of her revenge upon O'Hara, "and I am sure it would distress you to see Lionel Molyneux stretched dead at your feet, slain by a frenzied blow from your discarded lover."

"Don't—don't!" gasped Maggie, covering her ahy face with a pair of trembling hands. "I dare not even think of such an awful thing!"

"Then if you don't want something unpleasant to happen, you had better leave the management of affairs to me."

"Do what you will—only—keep them apart," moaned the young girl, still trembling and shuddering.

"That is right. I am glad you are going to be sensible. Everything will come right. Sir Lionel will hear nothing."

"But—but—Terence must be told. You—I—you—some one must write to him and tell him I am going to marry another man."

"Of course, I will do that," replied Maud, in the coolest manner possible. "I will send him a letter in a day or two." She did not add that the said letter would contain not one word with reference to her sister's intended marriage, but simply say that she had hurt her hand, and therefore had asked her (Maud) to write to him.

"Thanks," ejaculated Maggie, gratefully. "I feel I could not write to him on such a subject."

"Of course not; it will be better for me to do it."

"Yes, and—and—tell him how sorry I am that I have learnt to love someone else. Say that indeed I could not help it, and that I tried

to be true to him, and that I hope he will be happy," said the young girl piteously, "and meet some other woman who will take my place in his heart. And send him this, please," she added, holding out the shabby little ring he had given her, the pledge of her betrothal.

"Yes, certainly," assented her sister, taking the little gold circlet, and slipping it into her pocket. "I will do all that you wish."

"And—and—you think I shall be safe? You think Lionel—how softly, and tremulously she uttered the name—"will never know, never hear about my engagement?"

"I think you will be quite safe. I shall give Laura and Kate rather more than a hint to keep silent. You are aware Kate never liked Terence, and Laura is so much occupied with Walter Landon, and her distribution of beef-tea and Bibles, that she won't give your affairs a second thought."

"And—father?"

"That will be a more difficult task."

"Do—do—you think he won't consent?"

"I think he will, if properly managed. Of course it will be a great surprise to him at first, but fortunately for you, as you know, he did not like your first lover much, and gave his consent very reluctantly, so I dare say he will not be sorry when he hears that you have changed your mind and want to marry someone else."

"I hope he won't."

"I hope so, too. But you may depend upon my doing my best for you. I will speak to him to-morrow morning."

And on the morrow, soon after Mr. Randall retired to his study to pore over his beloved dusty, ancient books, he was disturbed by the entrance of his second daughter.

The Rector was sitting at a table strewn with papers and parchments, studying the pages of an old black-letter Bible. At his right hand was Baxter's "Saints' Everlasting Rest," at his left Foxe's "Book of Martyrs," on a chair beside him lay Farrar's "Life of Christ," and a volume of Thomas à Kempis's soul-calming pages, and all round the room the walls above the old oak wainscot, enriched with carvings of Satyr's heads, grapes and vine-leaves, and all manner of quaint designs, were lined with ponderous-looking tomes, in antique bindings, of a bygone day.

"Ah, Maud, my dear, is it you?" he remarked, looking up.

"Yes, father. I want to speak to you. Can you spare me a few moments?"

"Certainly, my child," he answered, settling himself back in the queer three-cornered chair, which was in character with the rest of the old-fashioned room, and keeping his finger between the pages of the Bible. "What is it you have to say to me?"

"It is about Maggie."

"Maggie!" he ejaculated, sitting up straight, an eager, anxious look in his blue eyes, and the look and action were a revelation of love; he was interested at once in anything that concerned his favourite child. "Maggie! Is there anything wrong with her?"

"Nothing much. Nothing but what can be set right, if you wish it!"

"I shall wish anything that will be for her good," he answered, quickly.

"I am glad of that. I believe you don't think that a marriage with Terence O'Hara would be for her good."

"No," replied the Rector, slowly, "I hardly think so. What makes you speak of him? Has he returned? Does he want to take my bird from her home-nest to some distant place?" and the old man's face was darkened and shadowed, as he spoke, with mistrust and doubt.

"No, he has not returned to Wingfield, and I speak of him this morning because Maggie has asked me to do so. She has come round to our way of thinking at last, and no longer wishes to be his wife!"

(To be continued.)

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FACETIE.

THE artist (entertaining some ladies and pouring tea): "Say when."

A BORE, meeting Douglas Jerrold, said, "Well, what's going on to-day?" "I am," exclaimed Jerrold, darting past the inquirer.

"I CAN tell you," says he, "how much water runs over Niagara Falls to a quart." "How much!" replied she. "Two pints."

HE: "Do you really think that absence makes the heart grow fonder?" She: "I'm sure I don't know, but you might try it and see."

"Now, Willie, did I give you permission to paddle to-day?" "No, mummy, but I saved a little bit of the permission you gave me yesterday."

REMBRANDT DAUBES: "May I paint your picture-que old barn, sir?" Farmer Jones: "Go ahead, sonny! But I'd rather ye'd paint the hen-house—it needs it most."

SPIFFINS: "That man yonder is a great musician." Snaggs: He must be an organist, then. He can't be a great pianist. "Why?" "His head is as bald as an egg."

"I HEAR you're talking of sending your son to college, Mr. Brown." "Yes, you see, he's sorter weak and puny-like, so I thought I'd give him a chance to develop some-muscle."

MR. SLICER: "I was reading the other day that there are 800 ways of cooking potatoes." Mrs. Slicer: "Yes?" Mr. Slicer: "Well, my dear, don't you think that if you tried hard you could learn one of them!"

"YES," said the young physician of aristocratic lineage, "our family has a motto, but I prefer not to use it. It's rather suggestive in my profession." "What is it?" "Faithful unto death."

WALTON (to fisherman): "Just throw me half-a-dozen of those trout." Fisherman: "Throw them!" Walton: "Yes; then I can go home and tell my wife I caught 'em. I may be a poor fisherman, but I'm no liar."

MR. GREENE: "Fanny how mothers will believe that their own children are so much better than anybody else's children." Mrs. Gray: "I know it. If all children, now, were like my little Georgie, it would not be so strange."

ONE day a lawyer was walking through a street with his large bag full of briefs, when he was impudently accosted by a boy, who asked him if he was a dealer in old clothes. "No," replied the lawyer; "these are all new suits."

HOUSEHOLDER: "What's that you are telling me?" Mr. Forceum: "Why, if you use one of these new gas-burners, you will save one half of your next quarter's gas bill." Householder: "Then sell me two, and then I will save the whole."

"At any rate," said the girl in blue softly, "the gossips never have buried themselves about me." "Of course not," answered the girl in pink sweetly. "There must be occasion for envy or jealousy before the gossips busy themselves about anyone."

MRS. HOMESPUN (suspiciously): "I wonder why Henry's college diploma is writ in Latin, Josiah?" Mr. Homespun (grimly): "Wai Sarah, to tell you the truth, I think the professors have got suthin' to say about Henry in that diploma they don't want us to know about."

A SALVATION ARMY man walked up to a militiaman in Burnley, and, taking him affectionately by the belt, said: "Young man, I likewise am a soldier—a soldier of Heaven." "Well, old 'un," replied the militiaman, "maybe you are; but you're a long way from your barracks, anyhow."

A YOUNG Whitechapel Hooligan enlisted in a cavalry regiment a few weeks ago. At his first church parade the chaplain made use of the words: "Slay them as Joshua smote the Egyptians." "Garn!" whispered Whitechapel 'Arry to his right-hand neighbour, "e don't know nuffink wot e's talking about. It was Kitchener 'oo swiped the Egyptians."

"ARE—N! So I have caught you kissing my daughter, have I!" Young Mr. Cooley: "I trust there is no doubt, sir. The light is rather dim, and I should feel vastly humiliated if it should turn out that I had been kissing the cook."

A TEACHER in a North of England board-school was recently examining a class of small boys in mental arithmetic. She said: "If your father gave your mother thirty shillings to-day, and two pounds to-morrow, what would she have?" And a small boy, near the bottom of the class replied: "She would have a fit!"

At a police-court recently a man was brought up for drunkenness. The Magistrate: "What did you want to get drunk for?" Prisoner: "Oh, it was only for a lark, sir!" "Oh!" answered the magistrate smilingly, "we have cages for larks. Go down for fourteen days!"

"You know," she said, with a little asperity, "that women have the reputation of being able to make money go farther than men!" "That's true," replied the man of small economies, "and it's just what I object to. What I want them to do is to let it keep still where it is and rest a little now and then."

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SOCIETY.

It is stated that the Dowager-Empress of Russia, the Princess of Wales, and the Duke and Duchess of Cumberland will pay a visit to the Danish Court in August, and will probably remain a month.

THE Princess of Wales chooses her own dresses with great care, and after receiving water-colour designs, frequently takes her own brush and marks some alteration in the designs by way of improvement.

THE Queen is said to be looking forward very much to the visit of her grandson, the German Emperor, for whom her Majesty has a great affection. The Emperor reverences and loves the Queen, to whom he is always most chivalrous in manner.

THE Princess of Wales never carries any money about with her. It was not so long ago that the Princess, on attempting to enter an entertainment incognito, found herself without the two shillings required to pay the entrance-fee.

No other sovereign in the world has what the Emperor of the Germans, Kaiser Wilhelm, has. This is a little post-office all for his own use. There is a special staff of officers detailed to look after, sort, and distribute the hundreds of letters that come for the Emperor every day.

No Russian Grand Duke or Grand Duchess can leave the Muscovite Empire without previously asking and obtaining the permission of the Czar; and in the same way English Princes and Princesses have to crave the sanction of Queen Victoria, the Austrian Archdukes and Arch-duchesses that of the Emperor Francis Joseph, and the Prussian Princes and Princesses that of the Kaiser before they can leave their respective countries for a foreign trip.

It is reported from Gmunden that the betrothal will shortly take place of the Princess Marie Louise, the handsome eldest daughter of the Duke and Duchess of Cumberland, and niece of the Princess of Wales, with Prince Frederick Henry of Prussia, eldest son of Prince Albert, Regent of Brunswick, and the Princess Marie of Sax-Altenburg. The Prince is destined to succeed his father as regent of the duchy to which the Duke of Cumberland lays claim. Prince Frederick has travelled much in the west of England.

THE Queen of Italy weighs more than any other Queen in Europe, her weight being 176 pounds, whereas Queen Victoria does not weigh more than 171 pounds. Next in weight comes the Queen of Spain, who weighs 147 pounds; and then the Queen of the Belgians, weighing 143 pounds. The Queen of Portugal is only 123 pounds; and the Empress of Russia does not weigh more than 120 pounds. The murdered Empress of Austria was under 100 pounds.

QUEEN MARGHERITA of Italy is not only a most distinguished-looking woman, but she is possessed of a singular charm which makes her beloved wherever she goes, and which tend to soften the reserve and ceremony which are otherwise one of the most striking features of the Italian Court. Add to this that she is the best of consorts, the most careful and self-sacrificing of mothers. The Queen is very fond of rural life, and is quite famous for her pluck and perseverance as a mountaineer. She is also an excellent linguist, speaking fluently five languages, and has a knowledge by no means superficial of Latin and Greek. The fine arts have in her a true friend.

At the close of the month the Princess of Wales will again leave England. It is her intention to spend some weeks in Denmark with her father, whose health gives her cause for considerable anxiety. Princess Charles of Denmark will accompany her, and also return with her in the autumn for a lengthened stay in England. The Dowager Empress of Russia will be in Denmark at the same time, and, if possible, the Duchess of Cumberland will also visit her father, so that all his daughters will be gathered round him at one time. Every effort has been made by King Christian's family during the last few months to keep him from feeling lonely, and as there has always been a family gathering at Fredensborg each year about this time, it was specially desirable that it should take place this summer.

STATISTICS.

In fifty-four cases out of one hundred the left leg is stronger than the right.

THE value of the fruit consumed in Great Britain every year is estimated at £10,000,000.

It is calculated that, in moving about from one place to another, the people of this country spend about £150,000 a day.

THE blood completes its circulation through the body in 22 seconds, and in three minutes every drop passes through the heart and lungs and is revitalised.

THE heart of a vegetarian is said to beat, on an average, fifty-eight to the minute; that of the meat-eater seventy-two. This represents a difference of twenty thousand beats in twenty-four hours.

GEMS.

HE is the best accountant who can cast up correctly the sum of his own errors.

DON'T blow out the lamp of reason for the galling of wit.

THE man who is never tired never knows himself. It is only in the furnace heat that the soul learns its own strength and weakness.

THERE are two ways of attaining an important end—force and perseverance. Force falls to the lot only of the privileged few, but austere and sustained perseverance can be practised by the most insignificant. Its silent power grows irresistible with time.

FROM a worldly point of view politeness is the best stock-in-trade that one can possess. It has opened more doors of advancement than any faculty, genius or art, because for strangers there is no other way to judge another's character than by externals.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

CHERRY DUMPLINGS.—Cover the bottom of a tumbler with stoned cherries, and sprinkle with sugar; add a couple of pinches of good baking-powder dough, then more cherries and dough until the tumbler is three-fourths full. Stand the tumbler in a steamer; cover tightly, and steam forty-five minutes. Serve with sauce flavoured with nutmeg.

FRIED TOMATOES.—Remove the skins and cut in slices from one-fourth to one-half inch thick. Dip them in beaten eggs, then in bread crumbs and fry in hot butter or lard. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Take the tomatoes out and thicken the gravy with a teaspoonful of milk, in which one teaspoonful of flour has been stirred. Place the tomatoes on toast on a hot platter and pour gravy over them. Serve hot.

LEMON ROLY-POLY.—Put one ounce of butter, three ounces of castor sugar, and the juice and grated rind of one lemon in a small enamelled pan, stir in slowly a beaten egg, and work all together on the stove till the mixture thickens. Make some light suet crust and roll it out thin, spread with the mixture; roll up; tie in a floured cloth and boil for three hours. Serve the pudding with a little sauce poured round.

STRAWBERRY AND CUSTARD Pudding.—Ingredients: Three eggs. One pint of milk. A little powdered cinnamon. Enough strawberries to make a thick layer on the bottom of the pie-dish. Butter a pie-dish. Stalk and halve the strawberries, and place them in the bottom of the dish. Shake over them about two tablespoonfuls of castor sugar. Beat up the eggs. Mix them with the milk, and strain it over the strawberries. Bake slowly till the custard is set. Dust over with castor sugar and a little powdered cinnamon. This is nice served hot or cold.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE finding of an extraordinary large opal is reported from Winton, Queensland. The value of the opal is between £7,000 and £10,000.

THE Chinese frequently condemn a prisoner to be kept awake till he dies. A criminal under such circumstances lives nine or ten days.

THERE are 4,500 different species of what are popularly known as "wild bees," of which 3,000 are found in North and South America.

THE wives of Siamese noblemen cut their hair so that it sticks straight up from their heads. The average length of it is about one and a-half inches.

It costs £5,000 to scrape the barnacles off one of the British men-of-war and repaint her. The operation has to be repeated twice a year in the case of nearly every vessel.

THE greatest of luxuries in Central Africa is salt. The long continued use of vegetable food in that country creates so painful a longing for salt that natives deprived of it for a long period often show symptoms of insanity.

THE dress of Japanese ladies is regulated by their age and condition. You can tell at a glance, if you know the rules, whether any lady you meet is married or single, and how old she is.

If a Chinaman dies while being tried for murder, the fact of his dying is taken as evidence of his guilt. He has departed, but somebody must suffer, and his eldest son, if he has any, is sent to prison for a year.

A TEMPLE of serpents in Werda, Dahomey, is an object of religious interest to the natives. It contains over 1,000 serpents, some of them of immense size. The priests care for them, and the superstitious worshippers bring offerings of birds and frogs, which are greedily devoured by the snakes.

MANY of the Manilla dead are entombed in the cemetery of Taco, one of the suburbs. The bodies are placed in niches of a thick wall, and the surviving friends pay rent for the dead for four years. If the rental is not renewed before the end of that period, the remains are removed and thrown into a bone pit.

THE gigantic telescope which is to be one of the attractions of the 1900 Exhibition is steadily approaching completion. The tube, the diameter of which is a little over 6 ft., is of steel. Its entire length will be about 70 yards, and it has had to be cast in 24 separate portions. The weight of this immense construction will be 21,000 kilogrammes.

AN ocean steamship route between Green Bay, Newfoundland, and the western coast of Ireland has been suggested. The distance is 1,500 miles, and the ocean trip would occupy three days. Fast trains from New York could complete the trip to Green Bay in two days, making the time between New York and Great Britain five days.

ACCORDING to a reliable authority, the frog does not hibernate in leaves or the trunks of trees, but in a dry hole in the ground not likely to freeze. He scratches the hole with his hind feet and enters backward. Once inside, there is apparently no trace of the fact outside. Frogs found under frozen leaves are still able to move about. Hibernating frogs have been found with their extremities and skin frozen, but their vital organs were still intact, and they recovered their activity on being liberated.

THE greatest Empire of the world is the British Empire, extending over one continent, 100 peninsulas, 500 promontories, 1,000 lakes, 2,000 rivers, and 10,000 islands. It surpasses the Assyrian Empire in wealth, the Roman Empire in population, the Spanish Empire in power, and the Persian Empire in area—all of which empires have passed away. The population of the Empire—402,615,900—is 27 per cent. of the population of the world; the 11,339,816 square miles of Imperial territory is 21 per cent. of the land of the world.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

POLLY.—Cold-cream should never be used for a greasy skin; but if it is inclined to be rough, a little vasoline and elderflower-water, or vasoline alone may be used.

ROS.—Try bathing them in a weak lukewarm solution of boracic acid and water, but when anything is wrong with the eyes the wisest plan is to consult a doctor.

IGNORANCE.—A "Filipino" means a person of pure Spanish extraction, born in the Philippines; a *Mestizo* is one of mixed blood; and the descendants of the Aborigines are known as "Indians."

VIOLETT.—We do not think there is any printed description of a *Stradivarius* violin that would enable you to identify one upon seeing it; the "points" are so minute that even experts are sometimes deceived.

THREE YOUNG MAIDS OF LUX.—If he pays you all the same attention he probably does not care in the very least for any one of you, and you would be wise if you tried to put him altogether out of your heads. It seems, however, that the matter has not gone very deeply with any of you.

VIOLET.—The fact that the gentleman's letters have constantly become more brief, and that his last is a typewritten note, is evidence that he wishes to discontinue the correspondence. It would certainly be unwise and unadvisable for you to persist in answering. This is the usual termination of such casual relationships.

URUBA.—The "Courts of Love" were institutions of the mediæval age, contemporary with tournaments, troubadours, Red Cross Knights, and other romances of chivalry. In these courts it was the custom for paladins and their lady-loves to discuss matters of sentiment, and subtle questions were propounded, to which courtesy replied.

NINA.—As soon as the flowers arrive, cut off the tip of the stalk of each and plunge the stem into water of about one hundred degrees. When the flowers have revived, put them in vases of clean lukewarm water to which a tiny pinch of salt has been added. The water should be changed every day, and the flowers placed in a cool room at night.

MATE.—The juice of two lemons; one ounce of flowers of sulphur; one ounce of cream of tartar. Put these into a jug and pour one quart of boiling water over, stirring thoroughly. When cold it is ready for use. The dose for an adult is one wineglassful every morning half an hour before breakfast for a week. For a child half a dose is sufficient.

DEMIZ.—The banner of Scotland is a blue field, three lions rampant, within a golden treasure. The banner of Ireland is a white field with a golden harp. That of England is a red field with three lions passant. The union of these three fields is the origin of the Union Jack, which is the flag of the British Empire, and the colours of which are blue, red and white.

HARRY.—We certainly do not think it advisable for a young lady, when engaged, to retain the likeness of a former lover. It might occasion heart-burnings and awkward embarrassments, even when the lady has no wrong intention. We should say, in all such cases, any friend of this kind had better not be kept where it might at any time cause an explosion.

ROS.—To remove scorch from linen use the juice of an onion. Bake a large onion and squeeze out the juice through a piece of muslin; mix with an ounce of fuller's earth, a little finely-shredded soap and a wineglassful of vinegar. Boil together till the soap has dissolved, leave till cold, and then apply the preparation to the scorched linen. Let it dry, and then wash in the usual way.

BETA.—For cleaning brown leather boots which have not of course become fouled beyond redemption, nothing suits better than washing with good sweet milk, and rubbing up to a polish with a dry cloth; where the dirt stains are deeply ingrained it may be necessary to wash with water containing a little oxalic acid, from chemist, then polish with boot cream obtainable at the leading boot shops.

LINA.—Cleaning these at home is rather a complicated performance, but it can be done if you have patience. First rub them well with dry cream of tartar; leave for an hour, and then rub with powdered alum and fuller's earth mixed in equal proportions. Let lay till next day, then brush quite clean, and rub all over with bran or the oatmeal, with which a little whiting has been mixed.

VEGETARIAN.—Lentils are a most useful and very wholesome vegetable; they make excellent purées, both for soup and vegetable, or garniture. There are two kinds—one small, reddish in colour, which is mostly used for purées; the other lighter in colour, flatter and larger, with not so tough a skin. They often contain tiny insects, but as these lentils always rise to the surface when soaked in water previous to cooking, it is a simple matter to throw them away.

A. K. M.—We advise you to write to the Secretary, Civil Service Commission, Cannon-row, Westminster, S.W., for lists of subjects set to candidates for assistant factory inspectors, with date of next examination; this will be forwarded gratis; you are then able to decide what amount of scholastic training you require to fit yourself for the examiners; but in the first place it is necessary that you should be nominated to the Home Secretary by a member of Parliament with the view of having your name put on the list of candidates for next vacancies.

SAPPHO.—No rules can be given, for the reason that no two authors write according to the same rules. The successful writer must first have imagination and a talent for invention. He must have a good command of language and be able to write correctly in a pleasing style. Hard study and diligent practice may improve his powers, but if he is not endowed with the gift of writing there is no use for him to think of becoming an author. A good education is a necessity.

POLLIE.—It is not in accordance with good taste or the usages of society to allow a young man the familiarities you mention—unless he is engaged to you. If he loves you and you return his feeling, you should become engaged, if circumstances will allow. Otherwise, you should conduct yourself in the conventional manner of friends. You certainly should obey your guardians in the matter, unless they are unjust and unreasonable in their restrictions.

ROSEBUD.—If a white hat is burnt with the sun it cannot be made white again, therefore should be dyed; such as are not burnt must be brushed outside and in with warm soap "suds," then rinsed in cold water; next have a small quantity of oxalic acid in a shallow basin or pan, pour in enough water to cover the hat, put this in, hold it down with a stick for about five minutes, then take out and dry in the sun or before a clear fire.

A. B. C.—That is a point which every man must decide for himself upon a deliberate review of his circumstances, especially asking whether he ought not to be well content with what he has and is likely to keep rather than venture all his savings on the mere chance of being at best only a very little better elsewhere, if he is not actually worse; it is not now so easy to make a fortune in the colonies as it once was. Address the Agent-General for that colony, Victoria-street, London, S.W., on the subject, and be guided by his reply.

THANKSGIVING.

AN, what says the sun in his glory?

"Thanksgiving."

As his rays fall in heavenly blessing,

On all living,

"Thanksgiving!"

Oh, what roars the vast sea so mighty?

"Thanksgiving."

Good to all on her broad bosom bringing,

Joy giving,

"Thanksgiving!"

Oh, what about goes up from the cities?

"Thanksgiving!"

Rich and needy unitedly bending,

Wrongs forgiving,

"Thanksgiving!"

Oh, what is the song of the angels?

"Thanksgiving."

O'er the sinner, once dead, now repenting;

Glad, living!

"Thanksgiving!"

A. R.—They must be published in the parish in which both parties at the time being live, or where the lady and gentleman are of different parishes, the banns must be published in each, and a certificate of their publication in the one church furnished to the clergyman who marries them in the church of the other parish. This trouble may be obviated by the lady or gentleman sleeping in the parish of the other party for fifteen days, which covers the three Sundays of publication.

IGNORANT.—The expression "an eulogy" is not correct; it should be "a eulogy." You would not say "an youth," yet the sounds "you" and "on" at the same, the sole object of placing the letter "n" after the article "a," when it goes before a vowel, is to render the pronunciation of the phrase more easy and agreeable. Whenever, therefore, the addition of that letter would not promote the object aimed at, it is not to be added. Anyone with an ordinarily good ear is aware that it is more agreeable to say "a eulogy" than "an eulogy."

PAPER BOX.—To make vegetable hash, chop two small carrots rather fine, one onion, and half a small head of cabbage. Put these in a saucepan, cover with boiling water, add a teaspoonful of salt and simmer gently one hour. Then add one potato chopped fine, one cucumber, also chopped, and simmer thirty minutes longer; then add a tablespoonful of butter. Moisten one tablespoonful of cornflour in a little cold water, add it to the hash, add a half teaspoonful of pepper and serve smoking hot. Curry may be added, and hash served in rice border.

M. P.—There is no provision for the resignation of a member of Parliament, therefore advantage is taken of the condition which requires that a member, on accepting an office of profit under the Crown, must apply to his constituents for re-election; with the view of giving free play to this condition the stewardship of the Chiltern Hundreds, a district in Buckinghamshire, is still kept alive, with a nominal salary of some five, attached to it; the member desiring to retire applies for the stewardship, gets it, then does not go to his constituents for re-election, but on the Speaker's attention being called to the fact that his seat is now vacant in consequence of the member having failed to be returned again, an order is issued for the election of one in his room.

NELLIE.—Get some camphine, put in a small piece of camphor, and gently wash the gloves in it till all the dirt is out. Put the gloves on a clean towel, then lift up one, and having previously got a wooden pin made round at the point to resemble the smaller fingers, put it into one, and rub down the glove, fingers, and other parts with a coarse towel till all the dirt appears to be rubbed out. Then repeat the operation with the other fingers and the hand. It would be better if two different pins were used to represent the large and small fingers. The pins should be about two-foot long, two inches in diameter, and taper at the point like a finger.

NAT.—One pint of spirits of wine, one ounce of gum copal, quarter ounce of gum arabic, and one ounce of shellac. Bruise the gums and sift them through a piece of muslin. Place the spirits and the gums together in a vessel closely corked, place them near a warm stove and frequently shake them; in two or three days they will be dissolved. Strain through a piece of muslin and keep it corked tight. To apply the polish fold a piece of flannel into a sort of cushion, wet it well with the polish, then lay a piece of clean linen rag over the flannel, apply one drop of linseed oil; rub your work in a circular direction, lightly at first. To finish off use a little naphtha, applied the same as the polish.

GUSKIE.—Double lengthways and strip off stalks; wash and wash until quite free from earth and grit; be careful not to break the leaves; put into a pan while still wet from washing, but add no water, sprinkle with salt, and put lid on; cook from twenty to thirty minutes till tender, stirring frequently with spoon; drain on a wire sieve, pressing out as much water as possible, now put clean dry plate under and rub up each through sieve, return to saucepan with a little bit of butter, salt and pepper; stir till hot, add a squeeze of lemon-juice, perhaps also a little cream; arrange on a hot dish, garnish with small appetizers of toast or fried bread; this with a poached egg on top is a good dinner for an invalid.

A. G.—You can sharpen an edged tool without whetting it. It has long been known that the simplest method for sharpening a razor is to put it for half-an-hour in water, to which has been added one-twentieth of its weight of muriatic or sulphuric acid, then lightly wipe it off, and after a few hours set it on a hone. The acid here supplies the place of a whetstone, by corroding the whole surface uniformly, so that nothing further but a smooth polish is necessary. The process never injures good blades, while badly-hardened ones are frequently improved by it, although the cause of such improvement remains unexplained. Of late this process has been applied to many other cutting implements.

SUNBURN.—To make the starch:—Put three table-spoonfuls of common starch in a basin; add to it one full teaspoonful of cold water, and mix quite smooth; then put in one teaspoonful of the melted white soap and one teaspoonful of borax into a teacup and mix; fill the cup half full of boiling water; mix thoroughly, and add to the starch in the basin; add also one small table-spoonful of turpentine; mix thoroughly and the starch is ready. To use it:—Take two collars, and with very clean hands, wash them in this very carefully; wring them out; repeat till all are done. Then take two collars, and rub them with the dry hands from end to end to rub the starch smooth. Put them within the folds of a clean towel, and wring very hard. Fold, clap them, and put in a pile to iron—starch shirt in same way. Place the collar on the ironing table, with the wrong side up. Iron lightly, turn over and iron lightly; turn the wrong side over again, and pull well out and iron heavily; turn once more, and iron very heavily on the right side; finally iron smoothly; rub over with a damp muslin rag, and polish with a round or polishing iron. Afterwards cut the collar and dry it. Same process must be repeated in the same way with cuffs.

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